

A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping letter dated July 11, 2016 was used to invite comments from Federal, State, and local agencies, affected Indian Tribes, and other interested private organizations and individuals. Scoping comments were accepted through August 24, 2016. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Western Everglades Planning Project (WERP) was published in the Federal Register (FR Volume 81, Number 143) July 26, 2016. A public scoping meeting was held August 16, 2016, in Clewiston, Florida. The table below provides responses to the comments received during the NEPA scoping period.

Comment Number	Commenter	Comment	Response
1	<p>Leslie D. Alderman, Jr. Florida Panther Conservation, LLC July 20, 2016</p>	<p>As you may know, my brother Jim and I formed the first Habitat Conservation Bank in Florida and the first in the Nation for the Florida Panther. As such we have a vital interest in all projects that might have an effect on the Panther as well as other Federally listed, threatened and endangered species and especially those in the Western Everglades Restoration Projects' foot print. It is a little difficult to be certain, given the scale of Figure 1, provided in the notice, but it appears that both of our Certified and Approved Conservation Banks as well as our next two proposed bank sites are located within the affected area.</p> <p>While we don't have enough information now to make meaningful comments, other than to congratulate you and your Team for taking on this monumental project, would you please add my name to your mailing list?</p> <p>You may also add my name to your list that would be willing to work with the corps and other stake holders on this wonderful project.</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for the Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP) encompasses the tributary areas of Water Conservation Area (WCA) 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP). As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p> <p>The Corps appreciates and welcomes your participation in the WERP process. As the study area is finalized, the Corps will review the information provided and determine if the referenced conservation banks are located within and/or adjacent to the study area. The Corps is committed to minimizing potential impacts on threatened and endangered species as a result of implementation of the proposed project.</p>

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2	Hal Wuluff July 24, 2016	<p>I am a resident of Jensen Beach Florida and I am one of those affected by the polluted water from Lake O. To be extremely brief: our state governing individuals are irresponsible with respect to doing what needs to be done - land south of the Lake needs to be purchased, condemned and water allowed to flow south. That is the way it was before Lake O was created. That is the way it needs to be in the future.</p> <p>The role of the US Army Corps of Engineers should be to put additional pressure on the state leaders and maybe even the federal lawmakers to make it happen. Under the current parameters, the Corps has no choice but to discharge water east and west. However, previous band aid solutions have been discussed and some implemented over the past decades and nothing significant ever happens. The time has come to implement Plan 6 and get the water headed in the natural direction -south. NOW.</p> <p>While it might not matter to you and the Corps, but myself and many others I know I will not vote for any candidates who are not progressively and aggressively supporting the southern flow of Lake O water. The destruction of our local economies and reduced property values means that the voters need to replace the current lawmakers in order to progress with the only possible solution. The Army Corps of Engineers needs to play an active part creating a natural southerly flow of Lake O water.</p> <p>Thank you for your anticipated efforts to bring about some relief and a more permanent solution. We have run out of band aids!</p>	<p>Regarding the reference to Plan 6 in the provided comment. The concept of a “flowway” or broad shallow marsh that is used to flow water freely from Lake Okeechobee to one or more of the WCAs was screened from further considerations as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Soil subsidence in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) has substantially reduced the hydraulic head that drives the southward flow of water; hence, velocities and flow rates are greatly reduced. A ‘flowway’ though the EAA would require the relocation of numerous roads, bridges and railroads. Further information on the evaluation of the concept can be found in the Central and Southern Florida (C&amp;SF) Comprehensive Review Study dated 1999.</p> <p>The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water, if any, from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project.</p>

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3	Barbara Susco August 16, 2016	To whom it may concern re: Everglades restoration.....Dan Peterson of the James Madison Institute has prepared an excellent backgrounder which includes his proposals. Knowing that he is an expert in these issues. I hope you will go to jamesmadison.org and click on the "Solving the Everglades Riddle" link. Starting on page 10 is Everglades Improvement about the "significant progress" and his "Recommendations for the Future" starting on page 11. I wish I could attend to present this in person but Clewiston is a long ride alone!	The provided information will be reviewed and applied as appropriate. Thank you for your comment.
4	David Ulrich Life Member of the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, Inc August 16, 2016	<p>Attached is a five page document that I plan to present tonight at the Clewiston Public Scoping Meeting on the Western Everglades Planning Project. I have no problem with the continuing priority of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan by the Congress! BUT the Reality is that water is NOT freely flowing under the NEW one mile bridge on the Tamiami Trail, South of WCA 3B!</p> <p>There are TWO Reasons for that low flow - ONE is the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow and the OTHER is a "deliberate design" choice to not build a canal for ecological reasons. Due to the MAJOR problems with BOTH the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and their estuaries - It is TIME to re-visit that no-build Design Choice! Florida Bay is twice as SALTY as the OCEAN! We MUST increase the FLOW of fresh water - NOW! Not in TWENTY years!</p> <p>For some time I have been very concerned about that LACK of flow to Fla Bay! I have a copy of a 20 page SFWMD document "System Constraints for Moving Water South" which was presented to their Governing Board on 3/12/15 by Jeff Kivett. I have used Page one as my page two, page five as my page three, and page nineteen as my page four. As I understand the history,</p>	<p>The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. The preliminary study area for the WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. The WERP study area does not include the area included in the SFWMD plan to send more water south to Florida Bay, however this plan may restore more natural flows in southwest Florida.</p> <p>Several issues face the CSSS including habitat suitability, small population size, skewed sex ratios, reduced fecundity, inbreeding depression, invasive predators, sea level rise, methylmercury accumulation, C&amp;SF Project infrastructure and water management operations. Regarding the portion of the comment referencing the most recently</p>

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		<p>a decision was made NOT to build a canal SOUTH of the Tamiami Trail for some environmental considerations. However TODAY's disaster on BOTH the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers would seem to require REVISITATION of that decision!</p> <p>On 6/22/16 the SFWMD announced a plan to send more water to Fla Bay - "By November, double the amount of fresh, clean water per year will start flowing into Taylor Slough, which connects to the freshwater starved Florida Bay. The new plan approved by the Governing Board will send an average of 6.5 billion gallons more fresh water per year to Florida Bay, in wet and dry seasons." PLEASE! This amounts to a "Drop in the Bucket" - MORE water per WEEK is currently going through the EAA Gates S- 351, S-352 and S-354! Fla Bay NEEDS much MORE to reduce salinity from the CURRENT 2X more SALTY than the OCEAN!</p> <p>A significant constraint is ALSO the CSSs Sparrow as an "Endangered Species" concern. However, while the US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service in July issued a five page "Biological Opinion" on the Sparrow - there is NO discussion of issues with PREDATORS in the Everglades. Clearly SNAKES like bird eggs, and the CSS Sparrow is a ground nesting bird! I would think a PREDATOR study of the Sparrow might well show that their decline is due to their own transfer into a hostile environment with NEW predators killing them AND their eggs. They may be "GONERS" no matter what the water level is controlled to be!</p> <p>No matter if the State Buys ALL the EAA land - IF no SOUTH flow is IMMEDIATELY CREATED from the FULL WCAs - there can be NO Everglades BENEFIT from any EAA purchase! Thus the</p>	<p>issued Biological Opinion (BO) for the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow (CSSS), the Corps reinitiated Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation on the Everglades Restoration Transition Plan (ERTP) on November 17, 2014 as a result of an exceedance of an Incidental Take Reinitiation Trigger from the November 17, 2010 ERTP BO for the CSSS. As a result of this consultation, USFWS determined that current conditions within CSSS habitat, threaten the survival of the sparrow, and as a result, the USFWS issued a "jeopardy" opinion, which explains that unless alternatives to current water operational practices are explored and implemented, continued implementation of ERTP is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the CSSS. The revised BO, issued July 22, 2016 by the USFWS presented a Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) that would avoid jeopardizing the CSSS. The RPA identifies operational modifications and expediting restoration initiatives for some of the structures in the southern portion of the Everglades ecosystem to provide suitable nesting habitat for the endangered CSSS.</p> <p>These actions include additional seasonal closures to outlet structures within WCA 3A, with the flexibility to open under high water conditions between October and November, and adjustments in operations in the South</p>

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		<p>CURRENT Lake "O" back-up that we NOW have will continue - thus requiring the MASSIVE discharges to both Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers that we currently HAVE! On 8/13/16, Betty Osceola said "Remember the reduction of pollution part. You can get all that in place but Federal regulations won't allow Everglades National Park to accept the water if it doesn't meet water quality standards. Efforts to strengthen and force polluters into compliance must also happen at the same time." The Fla Constitution SAYS that polluters "shall be primarily responsible for paying the costs of the abatement" Let's ENFORCE that provision!</p> <p>Sorry, but at my age, I feel I cannot wait another DECADE or two for a TODAY answer. I love the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan - but LET's pull the PLUG and FLOW the WCA's water SOUTH!</p>	<p>Dade Conveyance System (SDCS) that will enable additional flows to Biscayne Bay during the dry season, and increased flows toward eastern ENP to extend hydroperiods during the early dry season.</p> <p>Subject to applicable laws and regulations, the Corps will modify current water management operations to address the mandated terms and conditions of the July 22, 2016 ERTF BO.</p> <p>Furthermore, planning efforts are also currently underway for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) Project. The preliminary project area, where the placement of features will be considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee watershed north of the lake. LOW aims to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee; provide for better management of lake water levels; reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries downstream of the lake; and improve system wide operational flexibility.</p> <p>Both of these efforts will provide opportunities for storage both north and southwest of the lake. WERP and LOW were identified in the recent Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) update and will focus on areas</p>

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			<p>that will complement ongoing restoration efforts to the east of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Indian River Lagoon South Project (C-44 Reservoir)), west of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Caloosahatchee (C-34) West Basin Storage Reservoir) and south of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)).</p>
5	<p>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service August 18, 2016</p>	<p>NOAA’s NMFS Habitat Conservation Division has reviewed your staff’s scoping letters dated July 11, 2016, and August 3, 2016, indicating your agency is beginning preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the WERP Preliminary Study Area (Study Area) located in Hendry and Collier Counties, Florida. The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem.</p> <p>Estuarine habitats downstream of the lower WERP Study Area include mangrove wetlands, estuarine emergent marsh, and submerged aquatic vegetation, and are identified by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) as essential fish habitat (EFH) for post larval, juvenile, and sub adult shrimp; post larval, juvenile, and adult red drum; post larval, juvenile, and adult gray snapper; juvenile red and gag groupers; and juvenile and adult yellowtail and lane snappers.</p> <p>The area has also been designated as EFH by the NMFS for highly migratory species including bull, lemon, and bonnet head sharks. Detailed information on federally managed fisheries and their EFH is provided in the 2005 Generic Amendment of the Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf of Mexico prepared by the GMFMC and in the 2009 Amendment 1 to the</p>	<p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification Project. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. A BA for the CERP was submitted to NMFS on July 2, 2103 requesting concurrence with program and project-effect determinations submitted pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA. The BA determined that of the projects reasonably expected to be implemented as part of the CERP, only a handful of projects may directly affect, but are not likely to adversely affect listed species and their critical habitats under National Marine Fisheries Service purview. The Big Cypress – L-28 Interceptor Modification Project was identified within</p>

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		<p>Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan prepared by the NMFS as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Federal agencies that permit, authorize, or fund activities potentially impacting EFH are required to consult with NMFS and, as a part of the consultation process, prepare an EFH assessment. Based upon requirements in NMFS implementing regulations, an EFH assessment for the project should include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. an analysis of the effects (including secondary and cumulative effects) of proposed WERP activities on EFH, associated federally managed fisheries, and their prey within portions of the Ten Thousand Islands and Florida Bay;</li> <li>2. management actions taken to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to EFH;</li> <li>3. the USACE's views regarding the effects of these activities on EFH and managed species; and,</li> <li>4. proposed compensatory mitigation and adaptive management strategies, if unavoidable adverse impacts would result to EFH from the proposed activities.</li> </ol> <p>The EFH consultation can be initiated independent of other project review tasks or can be incorporated in environmental planning documents, such as the DEIS. Upon review of the EFH</p>	<p>the BA and resulting Programmatic BO (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Programmatic Consultation: December 17, 2013) as having no effect on NMFS species of Critical Habitat.</p> <p>The Big Cypress – L-28 Interceptor Modification Project will be the starting point for WERP plan formulation efforts.</p> <p>The Corps will coordinate with the NMFS in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA to determine Federally listed threatened and endangered species that are either known to occur or are likely to occur within the project area once the preliminary study area is further defined. The proposed action will be fully coordinated under the Endangered Species Act as well as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Corps commits to avoiding, minimizing or mitigating for adverse effects to federally threatened and endangered species. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental effects will be incorporated into the proposed action.</p>

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		<p>assessment, NMFS will determine if it is necessary to provide EFH conservation recommendations on the project.</p> <p>Finally, the project area is within the known distribution limits of a federally listed threatened species under purview of NMFS. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, it is your responsibility to review this proposal and identify actions potentially affecting endangered or threatened species, and/or their designated critical habitat. Determinations involving listed species should be reported to our Protected Resources Division at the letterhead address. If it is determined the activities may adversely affect any ESA listed species and/or their critical habitats, formal consultation must be initiated.</p>	
6	<p>Sandra Hare August 23, 2016</p>	<p>As a resident of Clewiston and native Floridian, I attended last week’s meeting, Aug. 16, 2016 in Clewiston at the John Boy Auditorium. This was not my first meeting, as I have attended USACE and SFWMD MEETINGS for over 35 years concerning Everglades Restoration and water issues.</p> <p>I own a business here in Clewiston and I have witnessed the economic destruction as some folks have rashly declared in open meetings “Flood the area, let the Lake go back to its natural sheet flow” and of course the newspapers and media love the irresponsible sound bites. Unfortunately, irresponsible soundbites and some outright lies have been enough to label the sugar farmers and vegetable farmers as being the sole reason for the condition of the water and the Everglades. Fortunately, Farmers, BMP practices and science is revealing that runoff from sugar fields is being cleansed and that phosphorous levels are actually lower than the criteria set years ago.</p>	<p>It is the combination of restoration projects under CERP as well as other federal, state, and local projects and programs that will improve the condition of the environment in south Florida. State programs such as the Basin Management Action Plans are specifically designed to address some of the concerns you raised. In addition, the CERP program’s Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project planning efforts are underway, which include the goal of reducing high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.</p> <p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The</p>

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		<p>The farmers have done their part; now when will the urban areas north, east and west of the lake begin to take responsibility to cleanse the water quality for the stormwater, road run off, rain, fertilizer leakage from golf courses, residential lawns, septic tanks, etc. that is causing pollution, algae bloom in the Kissimmee River, Caloosahatchee River , St. Lucie Canal, estuaries.</p> <p>The water quality problem can be solved if all parties will begin to work together to solve the problems. Reservoirs, STA's, holding areas are sorely needed north of Lake Okeechobee in the Kissimmee River Valley to cleanse the water from Orlando, Disney World, etc. BEFORE it comes into Lake Okeechobee. Common sense will tell you to cleanse the water at the head or top first to begin to put quality water into the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie, ultimately the estuaries. Furthermore, Lee, Martin, St. Lucie Counties need to instigate workable plans that will deal with the rain runoff, fertilizer run off, septic tanks, etc. that is spoiling the water quality along the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie Canal.</p> <p>Finally perhaps we all need to listen to our visionary Governor Scott about the need for more sewer infrastructure, need for green space, etc. before more development is granted.</p>	<p>purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>
7	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) August 24, 2016	Based on our initial review of the scoping public notice dated July 11, 2016, the EPA's main concerns relate to potential impacts associated with the proposed project including water quality, tribal engagement, and climate change (See enclosure). These environmental concerns are provided in the context of currently available information and are preliminary in nature.	Thank you for your comment. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated Project Implementation Report (PIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are developed.

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		<p>The EPA understands additional detailed analyses and further study will yield more information during the NEPA EIS process.</p>	
8	USEPA	<p>Water Quality: Phosphorus enrichment has caused adverse impacts to the Everglades. Under the Clean Water Act (CWA), States and designated Tribes establish water quality standards (WQSs) to protect the designated uses of waters within their jurisdiction. These WQSs may be expressed as a narrative criterion or as a specific numeric criterion. The WQSs are submitted to the EPA for review and, once approved, become the protective standards for CWA purposes. The Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and the State of Florida have established narrative and, in some cases, numeric criterion for total phosphorus (TP) to be protective of Everglades and cypress habitats within their jurisdictions. The EPA recommends that under the WERP the COE should take into consideration the WQS requirements, and other water quality requirements, for Big Cypress National Preserve, the Everglades Protection Area, the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Federal Big Cypress Reservation, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida's Federal Everglades Reservation. This includes the State of Florida's and Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida's water quality criterion of 10 parts per billion (ppb) for phosphorus for the Everglades marsh. We understand that the State of Florida has extensive efforts underway to address meeting the 10 ppb WQS for the Everglades Protection Area. These efforts include the Everglades Construction Project and the agreement reached in 2012 between the EPA and Florida for restoration strategies. However, no such specific water quality efforts are planned for the western Everglades to meet the tribal WQSs for phosphorus. All inflows to Big Cypress National Preserve, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida and</p>	<p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>

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		<p>Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida Federal Reservations are subject to the State of Florida's or the Tribe's WQSS.</p>	
9	USEPA	<p>Tribal Engagement: The EPA works closely with both the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida on environmental matters and is committed to working with other federal partners to prioritize the Tribes' water quality and water management concerns. The EPA encourages the USACE to consult and coordinate with the Tribes at all levels of decision-making and throughout the NEPA process.</p>	<p>The Corps intends to pursue an open and public process and recognizes the obligations that the Corps has to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Pursuant to Executive Order 13175 (Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments) and in consideration of the Corp's Trust Responsibilities, both the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida have been asked to participate in Government-to-Government consultation via correspondence dated July 6, 2016, as part of the Corps obligation for coordination under WERP. Potential impacts to historic sites and traditional cultural properties and practices will be assessed as part of the NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act process. Each WERP alternative will be designed and analyzed to consider the plan that best meets the overall project objectives while minimizing adverse impacts.</p> <p>Agencies including the SFWMD, the local sponsor, the BIA, the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and BCNP were asked at the beginning of the planning process to become cooperating agencies under NEPA for the WERP via correspondence dated September 2, 2016.</p>

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			<p>The Seminole Tribe of Florida indicated their acceptance to participate in the NEPA as a cooperating agency for WERP in correspondence dated September 13, 2016. The BIA indicated their acceptance in correspondence dated September 19, 2016. The Miccosukee Tribe of Florida did not provide a response.</p>
10	USEPA	<p>Environmental Justice: The EPA recommends that the USACE consider environmental justice (EJ) impacts associated with the proposed project as directed by Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" (dated February 16, 1994), when developing the Draft EIS. The EPA recommends that the USACE identify EJ communities within the project study area. It also helpful if these communities are graphically displayed on a map. The EPA further encourages the USACE to proactively reach out to EJ communities that might be impacted by the proposed project and discuss those outreach activities within the Draft EIS. The EPA suggests that the USACE consider using the 'EJ screening tool'. EPA, with the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, has issued Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews. We recommend that the USACE consider and apply, as appropriate, these considerations.</p>	<p>Environmental Justice will be assessed as part of NEPA process. Each WERP alternative will be designed and analyzed to consider the plan that best meets the overall project objectives while identifying and addressing any disproportionate adverse impacts. The provided information will be reviewed and applied as appropriate.</p>
11	USEPA	<p>Climate Change/Green House Gas (GHG): The Council on Environmental Quality's "Final Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Effects of Climate Change in National Environmental Policy Act Reviews", outlines a reasonable</p>	<p>Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions will be assessed as part of the NEPA process, including an assessment on project related emissions during construction and operations. Current Corps guidance for</p>

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		<p>approach, and we recommend that the USACE use this guidance to help outline the framework for its analysis of these issues. Accordingly, we recommend the Draft EIS include an estimate of the GHG emissions associated with the project, qualitatively describe relevant climate change impacts, and analyze reasonable alternatives and/or practicable mitigation measures to reduce project-related GHG emissions. In addition, we recommend that the NEPA analysis discuss how the USACE has considered changes to the design of the proposal to incorporate GHG reduction measures and resilience to foreseeable climate change. The draft and final EIS should make clear whether commitments have been made to ensure implementation of design or other measures to reduce GHG emissions or to adapt to climate change impacts.</p>	<p>incorporating the direct and indirect physical effects of projected future sea level change across the project life cycle in managing, planning, engineering, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining USACE projects and systems of projects will be addressed. Current guidance is contained in Engineer Regulation (ER) 1100-2-8162, <i>"Incorporating Sea Level Change in Civil Works Program (December 2013)</i>, and in Engineer Technical Letter 1100-2-1, <i>"Procedures to Evaluate Sea Level Change: Impacts, Responses and Adaptation"</i> (June 2014). The Corps has a nationwide interagency team that includes external and international experts currently engaged in developing follow-on guidance that will evaluate total water levels affected by surge, waves, and tides in addition to sea level change, and, if applicable, pertinent new guidance will be incorporate into the WERP study. This analysis will look at the effect of sea level change on the benefits predicted by the recommended plan. The provided information will be reviewed and applied as appropriate.</p>
12	<p>United States Sugar Corporation (USSC) August 24, 2016</p>	<p>USSC has long supported restoration of the Everglades ecosystem in accordance with CERP's goals and objectives. USSC recognizes that CERP included project features for the Big Cypress region. The background of WERP, as set forth on USACE's WERP website, considers the CERP component as a "starting point for the WERP and will be reviewed through the</p>	<p>Section 601(h) of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2000 states "[t]he overarching objective of the Plan is the restoration, preservation, and protection of the South Florida Ecosystem while providing for other water-related needs of the region,</p>

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		<p>planning process." The preliminary WERP planning area includes the area known as the C-139 Basin and shows potential, newly proposed canal connections from the Lake through both the C- 139 Basin and the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Basin to the WERP region.</p> <p>As a stakeholder and land owner in the planning area, including both the C-139 and EAA Basins, USSC attended the public meeting held August 16, 2016 in Clewiston, Florida, and we look forward to continued participation as the USACE implements the expedited, "SMART" Planning process for this feasibility study. We recognize WERP is currently at a conceptual level. Therefore, as the planning process refines the WERP features, the following points should be incorporated as or continued to be included as WERP constraints.</p> <p>Clarification of WERP's Purpose and Objectives and Related Process</p> <p>While preliminary WERP objectives were identified at the August 16, 2016 meeting, there are no details on how the objectives will be integrated with the existing CERP projects (first and second generation). Other statements were mentioned at the public meeting, such as "reducing high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries downstream of the lake." It is not clear if these statements are WERP objectives or expected results of the project. A clear understanding of the WERP's purpose and objectives will lead to meaningful alternative evaluations and the development of the appropriate performance measures.</p>	<p><i>including water supply and flood protection".</i> These same objectives apply to the WERP study efforts. Preliminary project objectives for the WERP have been defined and are listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Reestablish ecological connectivity of wetland and upland habitats in the western Everglades with restored freshwater flow paths, flow volumes and timing, seasonal hydroperiods, and historic distributions of sheet flow.</li> <li>*Restore oligotrophic (low nutrient) conditions to reestablish and sustain native flora and fauna.</li> <li>*Reduce wildfires that damage the underlying geomorphic condition of the western Everglades.</li> <li>*Promote system-wide resilience in light of future change, such as sea level rise and climate change.</li> </ul> <p>The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water, if any, from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the</p>

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		<p>Additionally, it would be helpful for the USACE to explain the timing and relationship between this feasibility study, the SMART planning process for a CERP component, and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group's meeting concerning WERP on August 23, 2016, as well as any additional workshops.</p>	<p>project. Potential project opportunities include improved system-wide operational flexibility by bringing more water south from Lake Okeechobee.</p> <p>The WERP is a SMART Planning Project. The Corps planning process has changed. It has been updated to address criticisms that it was too slow and expensive. Studies must not take more than 3 years to complete, not cost more than 3 million dollars, and include efficient/effective coordination and reviews amongst the 3 levels of the U.S. Army Corps Chain of Command (District, Division, and Headquarters) to address issues early and efficiently. A feasibility study works progressively through the six step planning process, with five key decision points or milestones. A brief description of each milestone is provided below. These milestones mark key decisions points.</p> <p>Alternatives Milestone – The Vertical Team and PDT agree on the focused array of alternatives and the criteria that will be used to evaluate and compare the alternatives to select the agency recommended plan. In addition, there is Vertical Team agreement that the objectives of the study are consistent with Corps authorities and priorities.</p>

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			<p>Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) Milestone – The Vertical Team and PDT agree on the plan that will be published as the TSP for public review. Concurrent to public review, technical, policy, and legal reviews will occur.</p> <p>Agency Decision Milestone – The PDT and Vertical Team bring forward the TSP to Corps Senior Leadership, including the Deputy Commanding General of Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO) for confirmation. With confirmation, this plan becomes the agency recommended plan that will be the focus of increased engineering and cost design/detail sufficient to complete the feasibility study report.</p> <p>Civil Works Review Board – The DCG-CEO approves the final report for state and agency review. For WERP, the NEPA document or EIS will be combined with the Corps planning document called a PIR.</p> <p>Chief’s Report Milestone – The Chief’s Report is developed for signature. The chief’s Report is then provided to the Office of Management and Budget to submit to Congress for consideration in the next Water Resources Development Act.</p> <p>The Corps intends to pursue an open and public process for WERP. Stakeholders may</p>

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			<p>provide input at PDT meetings and by providing comments throughout the NEPA process. Additionally, the Corps will consider input from the Task Force, Working Group and Science Coordination Group, SFWMD Governing Board and Water Resources Advisory Committee.</p>
13	USSC	<p>Protection of C-139 Basin Everglades Plan Components</p> <p>Lake Okeechobee is not currently connected to the C-139 Basin. Re-routing water from the Lake through the C-139 Basin was one of the suggested routes on the WERP Project map. Any quantity and quality of water being re-routed as a result of this project, into the C-139 Basin, must meet all applicable state and federal requirements. WERP planning should also include protecting the STAs that were specifically designed for treatment of the C-139 Basin's water. Movement of water from Lake Okeechobee through the C-139 Basin cannot result in any increased burdens on the landowners within the C-139 Basin.</p>	<p>Water quality requirements into, within, and from the C-139 Basin will be integrated into all phases of the planning process. One of the goals of alternatives delivering additional water to STA5/6 is to hydrate the STA in drier conditions to improve sustainability of efficient treatment within the STA. The primary purpose for STA5/6 remains treatment of C-139 Basin runoff.</p> <p>The following information is provided to clarify existing state water quality requirements unique to the C-139 Basin:</p> <p>The Everglades Forever Act, 373.4592(4)(f)5, Florida Statutes, states: "Effective immediately, landowners within the C-139 Basin shall not collectively exceed an annual average loading of phosphorus based</p>

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			<p>proportionately on the historical rainfall for the C-139 Basin over the period of October 1, 1978, to September 30, 1988. New surface inflows shall not increase the annual average loading of phosphorus stated above.”</p> <p>The rule under which the Everglades Program assesses compliance with the phosphorus loading from the C-139 Basin is Chapter 40E-63, Florida Administrative Code. Appendix B2 defines the performance measure methodology and states: “Future water year annual observed loading of phosphorus attributed to C-139 Basin for performance assessment by this methodology may be adjusted by the District to reduce basin boundary flows that are demonstrated not representative of historic conditions. Potential circumstances where the discharge attributed to C-139 Basin landowners may be reduced include discharges related to the District’s operation of the regional water management system for purposes other than flood control and inflows to the historic hydrologic boundary.”</p>
14	USSC	<p>Protection of the C-139 Water Supply</p> <p>The source of surface water within the C-139 Basin is from the L-1, L-2, and L-3 canal system. This system is within a SFWMD restricted allocation area and therefore no additional surface</p>	<p>The WRDA of 2000 requires CERP projects to identify water needed for the natural system to achieve CERP restoration goals and protect it from other potentially competing uses. At the same time, existing legal sources</p>

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		<p>water can be allocated by the SFWMD. In accordance with the Savings Clause (discussed below), the WERP planning effort should demonstrate how all existing water supplies will be protected.</p>	<p>of water supply for municipal and agricultural needs must also be protected. In addition, CERP implementation cannot reduce existing levels of service for flood protection. WRDA 2000 requires the inclusion of "Savings Clause" analyses within each CERP PIR. Such analyses will be conducted during plan formulation efforts for WERP. Please also see answer to question #13 for additional information.</p>
15	USSC	<p>Flood Protection for Landowners</p> <p>Likewise, as the WERP features are developed, the WERP planning effort should demonstrate no adverse impacts to the level of flood protection, consistent with the Savings Clause.</p>	<p>The WRDA of 2000 requires CERP projects to identify water needed for the natural system to achieve CERP restoration goals and protect it from other potentially competing uses. At the same time, existing legal sources of water supply for municipal and agricultural needs must also be protected. In addition, CERP implementation cannot reduce existing levels of service for flood protection. WRDA 2000 requires the inclusion of "Savings Clause" analyses within each CERP PIR. Such analyses will be conducted during plan formulation efforts for WERP.</p>
16	USSC	<p>Protection of Lake Okeechobee Water Supply and the CERP Savings Clause</p> <p>A statement was made by USACE staff at the August 16, 2016 public meeting that the WERP features will include a connection to Lake Okeechobee. If such a feature is added, the WRDA 2000 "Savings Clause" provisions will apply. This law requires that:</p>	<p>The WRDA of 2000 requires the inclusion of "Savings Clause" analyses within each CERP PIR. Section 385.35(a) of the Programmatic Regulations requires the development of a pre-CERP baseline to aid the Corps and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) when implementing the Savings Clause to determine if existing legal sources of water will be eliminated or transferred and</p>

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		<p>. . . [u]ntil a new source of water supply of comparable quantity and quality as that available on the date of enactment of this Act [December 11, 2000] is available to replace the water to be lost as a result of implementation of the Plan, the Secretary and the non-Federal sponsor shall not eliminate or transfer existing legal sources of water.... [Public Law 106-541,114 Stat. 2688; (WRCA 2000) at §§601(h)(5)]</p> <p>Any water made available from Lake Okeechobee to the WERP planning area must be demonstrated to be available in accordance with the Savings Clause requirement. The "pre-CERP Baseline", developed for the purpose of identifying the WRDA 2000 conditions protected by the Savings Clause, assumes that Run 25 is the Lake regulation schedule in existence, and must serve as the predicate for any WERP analysis. The WERP cannot properly be formulated using the temporary 2008 LORS regulation schedule.</p>	<p>to demonstrate that the levels of service of flood protection in existence on the date of enactment of WRDA 2000, and in accordance with applicable law, will not be reduced by implementation of a project. Such analyses will be conducted during plan formulation efforts for WERP.</p> <p>The Pre-CERP baseline assumed operation of Lake Okeechobee in accordance with the Water Supply and Environment Regulation Schedule (WSE) that was implemented in July 2000, not the Run 25. Consistent with the approach outlined in Draft Guidance Memoranda 3, which was developed to meet the intent of WRDA 2000 and the Programmatic Regulations, the following guidance will be applied by the WERP to address the effects of intervening non-CERP activities: (1) Savings Clause analysis only applies to changes from date of enactment of WRDA 2000 that result from "Implementation of the Plan"; (2) Intervening non-CERP activities are changes wholly outside of CERP – e.g., LORS 2008, Modified Waters Deliveries to Everglades National Park (MWD), C-111 South Dade, Interim Operational Plan (IOP), Everglades Restoration Transition Plan (ERTP), Everglades Construction Project (ECP), etc.; (3) Savings Clause does not require CERP to make up for reductions in quantity or quality</p>

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			<p>of existing legal sources or levels of service for flood protection caused by intervening non-CERP activities, but CERP cannot cause further reductions; and (4) Savings Clause does not prohibit CERP from reducing quantity or quality of existing legal sources or levels of service for flood protection increased by intervening non-CERP activities, but CERP cannot reduce those increases below those in place on the date of enactment of WRDA 2000. Updated supplemental Savings Clause analyses for previously authorized CERP projects, using the most current available information, may need to be completed prior to implementation of CERP projects if subsequent revisions to the programmatic IDS or other new information is determined by the USACE to significantly change the appropriateness of prior CERP PIR analyses.</p> <p>Potential environmental effects resulting from implementation of the project will be evaluated in the PIR/EIS. Water supply will be fully evaluated within that document.</p>
17	USSC	<p>Protection of the Everglades Restoration Strategies</p> <p>The Everglades Restoration Strategies are carefully designed to achieve ambient water quality standards in the Everglades. The potential routing of water from Lake Okeechobee through the area subject to Everglades Restoration Strategies cannot result</p>	<p>This project will not impact the ability of the State to meet water quality standards or impact the Consent Order milestone dates as laid out in the Restoration Strategies. Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be</p>

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		<p>in an impact to the ability of the State of Florida to meet any state water quality standards.</p>	<p>considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and applicable Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>
18	<p>Everglades Foundation August 24, 2016</p>	<p>Please accept the Everglades Foundation’s recommendations regarding scoping for the Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP). We are hopeful that this project will address long-standing issues within the Western Basins. Following the public scoping meeting, we remain unclear as to the hydrologic and water quality goals identified for this project and ask that the following questions be answered posthaste.</p> <p>Water quality within the basin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your water quality goal? In other terms what is your phosphorus standard for the Western Basins and at the discharge point from the basins into the WCA3A?</li> <li>• The land use in the three basins is mainly agriculture. Is the State willing to implement and enforce Best Management Practices in the area? Would this be one of your assumptions?</li> <li>• Is there 1,900 acres of already acquired land in the basin to build a Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) as envisioned in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)? What if more land is required?</li> <li>• How would modification in the L-28 canal system address water quality problems in the Western Basins?</li> </ul>	<p>Thank you for your comments, which address many issues that will be contemplated through the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. State, Tribal and Federal water quality standards vary across the basins and water quality goals at specific locations are being considered to meet these requirements. Much of the agriculture in these basins is currently under some form of BMP program. The latest information on these programs is reported in the draft 2017 South Florida Environmental Report (SFER), Chapter 4, which was posted on the SFWMD’s web board on September 26 for public comment. The State does not have authority to require or enforce BMPs on Tribal lands.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation</p>

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			<p>of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process. There is not currently a specific acreage of treatment defined for this project and no specific land has been acquired for this purpose. It is a combination of features that is intended to meet goals of the project. Upstream efforts to improve water quality combined with improved delivery timing and distribution should allow natural processes indicative of historic conditions to preserve and improve water quality throughout the system.</p>
19	Everglades Foundation	<p>Timing, amount and flow paths of freshwater:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the maximum opportunity for surface water storage reservoirs given land constraints?</li> <li>• How are you envisioning connecting Lake Okeechobee to the Western Basins? How much water could you bring from Lake Okeechobee and clean in STA5/6?</li> <li>• Is there additional treatment capacity in STA 5/6 when Lake Okeechobee water stages are high?</li> <li>• How would your plan impact the Restoration Strategies?</li> </ul>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water, if any, from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning and will examine the existing capacity of STA 5/6</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is this project expected to reduce high volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries? If so, by how much?</li> </ul>	<p>and the ability to bring more water south from Lake Okeechobee. This project will not impact the ability of the State to meet water quality standards or impact the Consent Order milestone dates as laid out in the Restoration Strategies.</p> <p>Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p>
20	Everglades Foundation	<p>Water supply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would increasing water supply in the Western Basins necessitate a steady base flow from Lake Okeechobee? If so, will this impact “new water” to be generated by the Central Everglades Planning Project?</li> </ul>	<p>As required by Section 601(h)(4)(A) of the of the WRDA 2000 and Section 385.35 of the Programmatic Regulations for the Implementation of CERP, the water made available by the project will be protected using the State of Florida’s reservation or allocation authority under state law. Prior to CEPP authorization, the SFWMD has protected the pre-project water for the natural system in the Holeyland and Rotenberger Wildlife Management Areas; WCA 1, WCA 2A, WCA 2B, WCA 3A, and WCA 3B; and ENP through the Restricted Allocation Area Rule for the Everglades and North Palm Beach/Loxahatchee River Watershed water bodies. The combination of protecting the pre-project water and protecting the water made available by the</p>

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			<p>CEPP project features is necessary for the CEPP to achieve its intended benefits.</p> <p>Prior to implementation of the CEPP, the SFWMD will protect the water made available by the CEPP project features using its reservation or allocation authority as required by 373.470, Florida Statutes (F.S.). Protection of water made available by CEPP project features is required in order for the SFWMD and the Department of the Army to enter into one or more Project Partnership Agreements to construct the CEPP project features.</p>
21	Everglades Foundation	<p>It is important that we continue to advance the goals set forth in CERP. We are concerned that utilizing boulder zone aquifer storage may be in conflict with the stated WERP objective of reducing water loss out of the natural system. In addition, this project cannot be considered a success unless it resolves the water quality concerns raised repeatedly by the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. While we look forward to continuing to work with you, it is paramount that these critical answers be provided to the public from the outset to facilitate meaningful engagement and restoration America’s Everglades.</p>	<p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. The current array of management measures being considered does not include deep well injection to boulder zone aquifer.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new</p>

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			<p>water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p> <p>The Corps intends to pursue an open and public process and recognizes the obligations that the Corps has to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.</p>
22	<p>Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) August 24, 2016</p>	<p>Within the Big Cypress region, the Restudy identified two components; (1) The Big Cypress/ L-28 Interceptor Modification project (CCC), and (2) the Seminole Tribe Big Cypress Conservation Plan. These components both had the objective of improving water quality and included construction of water quality treatment facilities with the purpose of meeting water quality criteria for restoration of the Big Cypress and the Everglades system, including improvements to nutrient generating agricultural sources within the Seminole Tribe Reservation.</p> <p>As envisioned in the Restudy, the initial Big Cypress/ L-28 Interceptor Modification project design for the stormwater treatment areas would be based on “water quality criteria of the Seminole Tribe and criteria applicable to Big Cypress</p>	<p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>

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		<p>National Preserve,” to ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. The water quality standards for the North and West Feeder Canals and the Big Cypress National Preserve have not changed since the Restudy, though the quality of water discharge into the North and West Feeder Canals has improved as a result of the C-139 Basin best management practices (BMP) efforts. Currently, a numeric nutrient criterion has not been established for BCNP. Further analysis should be completed to determine the appropriate water quality targets and treatment criteria.</p>	
23	FDEP	<p>There are numerous restoration projects, both CERP and non-CERP, that will affect the water quality, quantity, timing and distribution within the identified project area. As such, it is critical to identify all of the ongoing efforts within the project area so that the WERP project scope and project objectives can be clearly defined in light of all interrelated efforts.</p>	<p>The identification of restoration projects, both CERP and non-CERP, will be needed for development of existing and future without (FWO) project conditions within the study. The U.S. Water Resources Council’s Principles and Guidelines provide the instructions and rules for Federal water resources planning. One Principles and Guidelines requirement is to evaluate the effects of alternative plans based on a comparison of the most likely future conditions with and without those plans in place.</p> <p>Furthermore, the identification of restoration projects, both CERP and non-CERP within the project area, is critical to identifying cumulative impacts of the proposed action. The primary goal of cumulative effects analysis is to determine the magnitude and significance of the environmental consequences of the proposed action in the context of the</p>

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			cumulative effects of other past, present, and future actions. The Corps concurs with this comment.
24	FDEP	In 2015, the Department and SFWMD initiated a phased study called the “Western Basins Water Resource Evaluation” in an effort to support the Western Everglades restoration efforts. This study has identified opportunities for additional hydrologic and water quality improvements that will support WERP. This study includes development of models to assess hydrology and water quality, identifying data gaps, assessing potential projects with landowners, and identifying potential state and federal funding opportunities. The Western Basins Water Resource Evaluation has included the development of assessment tools for the northern portion of the WERP project boundary. In moving forward with this CERP project we recommend using the modeling tools that have already been developed for the Western Basins Water Resource Evaluation as a foundation for the WERP watershed modeling efforts that will be required to assess project benefits.	The referenced water resources evaluation study specifically focuses on the Feeder Canal Basin and the C-139 Annex, which are currently within the preliminary study area for WERP. As they become available, information from the Western Basins Water Resource Evaluation is being provided to the project team by the SFWMD. The provided information will be reviewed and applied as appropriate. Thank you for your comment.
25	Audubon, Florida, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary  August 24, 2016	On behalf of Audubon Florida, I am submitting comments and recommendations on the proposed WERP. Audubon Florida, including its Western Everglades Research Center based at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, participated in WERP NEPA scoping hearing in Clewiston on August 16, 2016 and yesterday in the WERP Public Workshop, also in Clewiston, sponsored by the Task Force. Additionally, Audubon Florida led a six-year (2005-2011) aquatic fauna baseline monitoring project in the Big Cypress region on contract for the Corps. These baseline data on aquatic biota were collected in preparation for the L-28 Interceptor/Big Cypress CERP Project. Audubon’s experience in the Big Cypress and the data collected are important for designing the current WERP which includes the L-28	The provided information will be reviewed and applied as appropriate. Thank you for your comment.

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		<p>Interceptor/Big Cypress CERP project. Audubon Florida is fully supportive of planning for ecological restoration of the Western Everglades’ Big Cypress Swamp – it is a vital and unique part of the greater Everglades. Following are Audubon’s initial comments and recommendations on WERP.</p>	
26	Audubon, Florida, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary	<p>1. Project Boundary: Audubon Florida recommends expanding the project boundaries from their current proposal to incorporate more of the BCNP. This would allow for important opportunities to achieve necessary hydrologic restoration of the areas around the Jetport which need degradation of water control structures, Loop Road around the bottom of the L-28, Tamiami Trail culvert fixes, L-28 tieback removal, and L-28/WCA 3A levee degradation to link these two ecosystems where water quality is not an issue.</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for the WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p>
27	Audubon, Florida, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary	<p>2. Baseline and Project Ecological Monitoring: Because of the unprecedented nature of Everglades Restoration generally, and the specifically unique ecology of the Big Cypress and Western Everglades ecosystems, Audubon Florida strongly recommends resuming baseline monitoring of performance measures (i.e., nutrients, hydrology, aquatic fauna, wading birds, vegetation, etc.) to guide the planning and design of an effective WERP. The baseline monitoring done under contract for the Corps by Audubon was ended by the Corps in 2011. These are among the only biotic data now available to guide project planning in this region and they only include aquatic species – no wading birds. They are not sufficient. Targeted wading bird monitoring has not been conducted in BCNP since 2002 (source: South Florida Wading Bird Reports).</p> <p>Additionally, the ultimate WERP must have pre- and post-project ecological monitoring for identified performance</p>	<p>An Adaptive Management (AM) and Monitoring Plan will be developed during plan formulation efforts. The AM and Monitoring Plan will identify the monitoring information needed to inform WERP implementation and to document restoration progress to agencies, the public, and Congress. The WERP AM and Monitoring Plan will contain descriptions of monitoring that should address specific scientific uncertainties identified during WERP planning as well as required parameters (e.g. water quality, water level, ecological factors) to track WERPs progress toward success. Desired monitoring durations and frequencies will be identified for each parameter. Regulatory monitoring</p>

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		<p>measures on frequent (several times annually) intervals. Unprecedented restoration, especially in poorly understood ecosystems, depends on monitoring and adaptive management strategies.</p> <p>As a lesson being learned, the Picayune Strand CERP project lacks sufficient monitoring to evaluate ecosystem and performance measure responses with monitoring conducted in multi-year intervals and failing to quantify wading bird prey densities or response of higher trophic levels (e.g., wading birds, alligators). The danger of inadequate temporal replication in a monitoring plan is illustrated by the first (WY17) post-restoration monitoring in Picayune Strand that happens to coincide with an extended period of inundation due to the record breaking rainfall in January 2016 and will certainly make effects of restoration indistinguishable from effects of climatologic variation.</p>	<p>will be continued as long as required by applicable regulations. AM and monitoring being conducted to track restoration success will continue up to 10 years, per WRDA 2007 Section 2039, in coordination with WERP construction.</p>
28	Audubon, Florida, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary	<p>3. Water Quality Requirements of the Big Cypress: While Audubon supports an investigation of any opportunities to move water south from Lake Okeechobee, including in the Western Everglades, that investigation must assure that any water introduced into the Big Cypress region does not exceed its ability to accommodate nutrients. Therefore, Audubon Florida recommends studies to first address the research question of what that harmful nutrient threshold is for ecosystems in the Western Everglades. In lieu of this knowledge, the assumption must be conservative on nutrients (10 ppb), and monitoring must address what those levels actually are in target ecosystems and during varying conditions (post-rain events, drought, canals, etc.).</p>	<p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p> <p>As stated in the response to comment 27 above, an AM and monitoring plan will be</p>

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			developed for WERP. This plan and will include regulatory monitoring with respect to water quality.
29	Audubon, Florida, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>The Western Everglades/Big Cypress region is very different from the ridge-and-slough habitat of the Greater Everglades and we cannot assume that our understanding of how the ecosystem will respond to increased eutrophication and inundation learned in the latter can be applied directly to the former. Audubon Florida’s research on connections between hydrology, aquatic fauna, and wading birds (particularly Wood Storks) conducted in the Big Cypress and the Corkscrew Swamp for many years have demonstrated the unique nature of the Western Everglades and the need for ecological restoration. Wood Stork and other wading bird populations have declined over 90% since the 1930s and super colonies, like those of White Ibis in western WC A3A/eastern BCNP and that of Wood Storks at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, have largely been lost. Audubon and others have documented the particular importance of aquatic prey concentrated in short-hydroperiod wetlands in the Western Everglades early in the Wood Stork nesting season (and pre-nesting). This resource is critical for the recovery of Wood Storks throughout the Everglades system.</p>	The Big Cypress region supported the two largest nesting colonies of wood storks in North America between 1900 and 1965. The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. Project objectives include the restoration of seasonal freshwater volumes, hydroperiods, and distribution across the landscape to support a natural mosaic of wetland and upland habitat and associated fauna. The Big Cypress Regional Ecosystem Conceptual Ecological Model hypothesizes that, conversion and drainage of wetlands, including larger wetlands as well as shallow depressions in hydric pinewoods, has resulted in a reduction in distribution, density, and early seasonal concentrations of wetland fish populations, the primary cause of nest failure and colony abandonment by wood storks in the Big Cypress region. Improvements in the loss of early dry season foraging habitat is critical to wood stork success.
30	Audubon, Florida, Corkscrew	Audubon Florida is confident a well-planned WERP will provide tremendous ecological benefits for relatively reasonable investment of public resources. To achieve this, we	Thank you for your comments. Please see above responses to comments 25 through 29.

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	Swamp Sanctuary	recommend expanding the WERP boundary to incorporate more restoration opportunities in the BCNP, resumption of baseline ecological monitoring and inclusion of project implementation monitoring several times annually, and studies to ascertain the nutrient tolerance of Western Everglades ecosystems, especially when considering introduction of additional water from Lake Okeechobee or other northern basins. Thank you for considering our comments, and Audubon Florida intends to remain a key partner in this restoration.	
31	Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Everglades Trust, Naples Backcountry Fly Fishers, National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club  August 24, 2016	<p>The undersigned organizations submit comments on scoping for the WERP to the Corps and the South Florida Water Management District (District) in accordance with the NEPA. We support expedited planning and implementation of WERP as an important component of the CERP which outlines the path to fully restoring America’s Everglades.</p> <p>Establish Specific Volumetric and Pollution Reduction Project Goals</p> <p>Given the three-year timeframe for this planning effort, we request that the Corps and District quickly establish project goals and performance measures related to ecosystem benefits. Specifically, what amount of storage capacity will be added to the system? What are the targets for improving water flow and water quality into and through BCNP and ENP? What are the volumetric and pollution reduction goals of this project as it relates to the health of the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River? We request detailed information on exactly how and where water storage, conveyance, and treatment occur as well as what level of benefit will be provided to the Caloosahatchee River and overall ecosystem as a result. Having a clear, detailed understanding of the scope and capacity of</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for the WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated. Both structural and non-structural features or activities that address one or more planning objectives will be formulated for the study area.</p> <p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in</p>

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		<p>WERP will allow stakeholders to better comprehend how this project will work within the network of ongoing and planned restoration efforts that will collectively achieve our long term restoration goals.</p>	<p>the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are completed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p> <p>The project team will utilize performance measures (PMs) to evaluate alternative plans. These PMs will be developed from the Big Cypress Regional Ecosystem Conceptual Ecological Models (CEM) which identifies the major anthropogenic drivers and stressors on the natural system, the ecological effects of those stressors, and the best biological attributes or indicators of those ecological responses.</p> <p>As the planning effort for WERP continues, a methodology will be developed to calculate Habitat Unit (HU) values for the study area. The HU are used as the basis to compare alternatives and identify a selected plan for ecosystem restoration projects. Typically, PM scores are aggregated and average to produce a habitat quality index (HSI). The PM scores are obtained from a hydrologic model and are indicators of conditions in the natural system that have been determined to be characteristic of a healthy restored ecosystem. The PMs scores cover all regions</p>

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			<p>of the study area. The HSI is then multiplied by acreage to generate a HU for each alternative. Where necessary, additional tools or metrics may be utilized to supplement HU scores and assist in plan comparison.</p>
32	<p>Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Everglades Trust, Naples Backcountry Fly Fishers, National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club</p>	<p>Achieve Ecological Benefits Outlined in CERP and Restoration Strategies</p> <p>The Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modifications Project (9.1.6.1) of CERP calls for 7,600 acre-feet of storage and 1,900 acres of STAs in the Western Everglades region, and has the stated goal of reestablishing sheet flow into BCNP. We understand the scope of this project may be expanded to also include connections to Lake Okeechobee that could help alleviate estuary discharges and flow water into ENP, specifically the Ten Thousand Islands area. As the guiding document to achieve long term restoration, any and all project planning efforts must achieve or exceed the ecological benefits outlined in CERP. Additionally, we request that the Corps and District outline how this project will work with and enhance the ecological targets of the Restoration Strategies key projects – without double counting those planned project components – including the 11,000 acre-foot FEB and 800 acre STA planned for the western basin.</p>	<p>Please reference comment 31 above with respect to how benefits are calculated within Corps planning projects.</p> <p>The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning and will examine the existing capacity of STA 5/6 and the ability to bring more water south from Lake Okeechobee. This project will not impact the ability of the State to meet water quality standards or impact the Consent Order milestone dates as laid out in the Restoration Strategies. As part of this process, the team will look at Restoration Strategies, CEPP and other efforts in the area to ensure compliance and incorporation, without double counting, into the WERP study area.</p> <p>Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p>

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33	Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Everglades Trust, Naples Backcountry Fly Fishers, National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club	<p>Define Project Footprint &amp; Expectations for Land Acquisition</p> <p>Understanding project constraints is critical during scoping and initial planning, particularly as it relates to the project footprint. We request detailed information about available lands within the project area – both areas already in public ownership and those that may be acquired as part of the WERP process. State funding is available through Legacy Florida and Floridians strongly supported the 2014 ballot initiative to fund land acquisition to protect critical water resources. Understanding the opportunities to maximize public ownership of land within the WERP region will allow the project team to work toward an end-result that maximizes ecological benefits.</p> <p>Thank you for considering our comments. We look forward to continued dialogue and progress on WERP and other critical projects, including storage, treatment, and conveyance in the EAA, which together will achieve the long term goals for restoration of America's Everglades.</p>	<p>Through the planning process, the Corps will draw conclusions with regard to the use of lands already acquired for restoration purposes and their potential use in WERP. The Corps understands that the state currently supports efforts sited on available lands and that the state considers those to be preferable for economic and other reasons. The State owns approximately 35,000 acres of land within the study area, with additional parcels being under State and Federal. The team will consider that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during plan formulation efforts.</p>
34	Diana Umpierre Sierra Club August 24, 2016	<p>Restoration Project (WERP).</p> <p>We would like the following questions answered as quickly as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the specific quantifiable ecological targets for this project, such as those related to water storage volume, water flows and water quality reduction?</li> <li>• How will this project help or not help the health of the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River?</li> <li>• Will this project be hydrologically connected to Lake Okeechobee? If yes, how?</li> </ul>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the specific targets for improving water flow, water distribution, and water quality into BCNP and ENP?</li> <li>• What are the specific project features and methods that will be used to store, treat and convey water?</li> <li>• Does the Western Everglades project include storage through aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wells?</li> <li>• Has all the land needed been acquired? Is it all in public hands? If not, how and when will additional lands be identified and acquired?</li> <li>• How will this project impact or help Florida panther habitat and those of other protected species?</li> <li>• We also ask that the following points be taken into account during the length of this project scoping phase.</li> <li>• We strongly oppose the use of Aquifer Storage and/or Recovery (ASR) wells. This type of method should NOT be included in this or any other Everglades restoration project.</li> <li>• Any water sent to Big Cypress must be clean, and only what that specific basin needs and not more. It must not substitute for water that should be sent south through the central Everglades.</li> <li>• While the Western and Northern Everglades projects are also important, we need planning to begin NOW for storage, treatment and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee, in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), not in 2021. We request for Governor Rick Scott's SFWMD-appointees to simultaneously plan for south of the Lake. USACE has already said they are ready to start the planning. That's the highest priority: to start the planning of the missing piece of the puzzle that</li> </ul>	<p>Information is not yet available to address several of the provided comments. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p> <p>Through the planning process, the Corps will draw conclusions with regard to the use of lands already acquired for restoration purposes and their potential use in WERP. The Corps understands that the state currently supports efforts sited on available lands and that the state considers those to be preferable for economic and other reasons. The State owns approximately 35,000 acres of land within the study area, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management. The team will consider use of that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during plan formulation efforts.</p>

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		<p>would send clean water south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to submit these questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.</p>	<p>With regard to the portion of the comment pertaining to potential impacts to the Florida panther, an analysis of the potential for elimination or modification to panther habitat as a result of WERP implementation will be made. The Corps will coordinate with the USFWS in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA. The Corps commits to avoiding, minimizing or mitigating for adverse effects to federally threatened and endangered species. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental effects will be incorporated into the proposed action and the planning process.</p>
35	<p>David Ulrich Life Member of the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, Inc  August 24, 2016</p>	<p>While we have a wonderful CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan) and a NEW proposal from Senator Negron to BUY some 60,000 acres of EAA (Everglades Agricultural Area) sugar land - WHAT IS TODAY's ACTION PLAN??</p> <p>Folks - I submit that unless we come up with an IMMEDIATE and AFFORDABLE action plan for TODAY that we might as well be the Captain of the Titanic telling staff to move the deck chairs so passengers could get a better view of the ICEBURG! Blue-Green Algae is KILLING our Tourism and this has now gotten NATIONAL attention! I re-attach some of what I just sent on August 16th - the WCAs (Water Conservation Areas) are FULL and the S-350s gates are CLOSED! Not to mention that the S-12 four gates are also not active in release of water to the Everglades! What do I suggest? As you may know, I am NOT an expert in this field - but I have been studying it for some time. BOTH the State and Federal Government MUST come up with a workable and affordable TODAY ACTION PLAN. As a layperson,</p>	<p>The Corps and SFWMD are committed to implementing CERP. The IDS provides the sequencing of federally cost-shared Everglades restoration projects. A formal re-valuation of the IDS completed in 2015. The re-evaluation of the IDS maximizes holistic benefits to the regional system as early as possible and ensures that additional projects will be ready in order to continue progress on Everglades restoration.</p> <p>Furthermore, the CEPP is currently awaiting congressional authorization. This component of the CERP focuses on improving the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water flows to the Northern Estuaries, central Everglades (WCA 3 and ENP) and Florida Bay while increasing water supply for</p>

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		<p>I would submit that we need to study the CREATION of a FULL-FLOW connection from the ENP East Gate to NOW move water to Taylor Slough! The current plan to move 6.5 Billion gallons of water per YEAR to Florida Bay via Taylor Slough is really just a "DROP in the BUCKET" of the NEED of the Freshwater STARVED Fla Bay!</p> <p>Unless SIGNIFICANT water is moved out of the WCAs - it does not matter if the State BUYS all of the EAA! If the bottom "PLUG" is not fixed TODAY, all surplus water will continue to be forced down BOTH the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and the Florida Bay will continue to DIE!! Therefore, I PLEAD for a REAL study of an EASTERN flow through the new mile long Tamiami Trail bridge to a NEW Flow-way connection to Taylor Slough! Only a small amount of water is currently flowing there, due to an established MAXIMUM allowed level in the present canal system!</p> <p>NOTE: ABOVE paragraphs were shared with group leaders by the writer as (Draft) at yesterday's South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group Workshop held in Clewiston from 10-4 at John Boy Auditorium. They are still the same as the DRAFT shared. The Following is in addition.</p> <p>The FACT that ALL areas of the huge Lake "O" and the WCAs (Water Conservation Areas) are SATURATED with water is of GREAT CONCERN! We are at the height of our HURRICANE Season, and there is no place for any NEW water to go! The LAKE is over 15' and essentially all water gates are closed, both below the Lake and below the HUGE area of the Water Conservation Areas! Even rain water addition could over STRESS</p>	<p>municipal, industrial and agricultural users. The CEPP recommended plan would achieve these benefits by reducing the large pulses of regulatory flood control releases sent from Lake Okeechobee by redirecting approximately 210,000 acre-feet of water on an annual basis.</p> <p>With regard to the portion of the comment addressing current system conditions, Corps water management operations staff evaluate conditions within the C&amp;SF Project on a daily basis and during February-May 2016 enacted a temporary emergency deviation to the current WCA 3 water control plan due to high water levels and potential natural resources. Interagency coordination efforts to develop the next regional operations plan to include WCA 3A began in June 2014 with the start of the scoping process for the MWD Increment 1 field test. The MWD Increment 1 field test is the first increment in a series of three related, sequential efforts that will result in a comprehensive integrated water control plan (COP) for the operation of the water management infrastructure associated with the MWD and C-111 South Dade Projects fully integrated with the C&amp;SF Project. The incremental approach to the development of the COP will 1) allow interim benefits towards restoration of the natural systems, 2) reduce uncertainty of operating the components of the MWD and C-111 South</p>

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		<p>the fragile system! Imagine the DEATH and DISTRUCTION which MIGHT ENSUE if a major collapse OCCURRED!</p> <p>WHAT can be DONE? This situation requires some unusual JOINT efforts from the State of Florida AND the Army Corps! It would seem that there is MONEY if ALL existing projects were scanned to see what appropriated funds will likely not be ABLE to be USED this fiscal year. THOSE funds COULD be put into a JOINT FED/STATE pot - and allocated to an EMERGENCY plan! USE that money to CREATE a REAL FLOW from the WCAs through the new mile long Bridge on the Tamiami Trail and down to Taylor Slough. Florida Bay is DYING and MORE water to both the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers will EXTEND our present DISASTER! Florida Bay might ALREADY be past the point of NO RETURN!</p> <p>PLEASE - READ this and take the NEEDED actions! It is time that OUR Governments came up with a WORKABLE and TODAY plan of ACTION!</p>	<p>Dade Projects, and 3) provide information to complete the COP efficiently. The increments include conducting field tests for existing structures, developing operating criteria for existing and planned structures, and ultimately updating the WCAs-ENP-SDCS Water Control Plan. Pending future acquisition of required real estate interests along Tamiami Trail and additional NEPA documentation, present expectations are that the COP will not be implementable until late 2018 or later.</p>
36	<p>Andy Gottlieb August 24, 2016</p>	<p>Hope all is well in Jacksonville. I am providing a few comments for the Western Everglades Restoration Project. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the meeting yesterday but would still like to provide a few thoughts. (Just getting back from summer vacation, so happy I made it back in time). For the last few months we have been working out at Dinner Island (and surrounding area) so I am starting to have a good understanding of the ecology, topography and flow direction details in the region.</p> <p>A couple of questions and comments below:</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream BCNP.</p> <p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the</p>

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		<p>1) I am curious how the project boundaries were originally defined? It appears that the western project boundary does not account for connectivity to the OK Slough area. I would recommend considering expanding the project boundaries to include property to the West (particularly the link to Okaloocoochee Slough) and southwest (OK slough south provides water in multiple directions and has the potential to improve flows to the C-139, as well as Big Cypress). This area is currently not included in the proposed footprint, but definitely effects the water budget of the WERP area.</p> <p>During recent field work we observed water levels several inches higher in OK slough relative to those in Dinner Island (divided by levee, so seems to be an artificial divide). This was a few months ago so I expect the differential is likely greater depending on time of year.</p> <p>2) Concern for habitat along with water storage, these areas should not be used just to stack water but rather to improve habitat and connectivity thereby incorporating storage into the larger concern (as well as improved water quality treatment).</p> <p>3) Using a larger scoping area is likely important from a regional perspective and will help improve understanding of the effects of boundary conditions. Personally I would like to see the project domain cover from Caloosahatchee southward and then incorporate OK slough (perhaps as far as SR29). That would provide a more realistic view of the water budget and the actual watershed boundaries.</p>	<p>West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. Project features considered under CERP include modification of levees and canals, water control structures, pumps, and stormwater treatment areas with a total storage capacity of 7,600 acre-feet located within and adjacent to the Miccosukee and Seminole Indian Reservations in Collier and Hendry Counties.</p> <p>The preliminary study are for WERP was defined based upon the conceptual rendering of the Big/Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification Project which will serve as a starting point for the WERP.</p> <p>The preliminary study area represents the area of interest and is defined by the project authority; the location of alternative plans; and the location of resources that have the potential to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the project.</p> <p>As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p>

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		<p>At a minimum we should understand the link to OK slough on the west, and how OK effects south and eastward flows (on the S end of the area) See attached figure.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to provide input. I think this is a very important area that should not be overlooked when we envision restoration in S FL and the Everglades. Please let me know if you have questions.</p>	<p>The provided information will be reviewed and applied as appropriate. Thank you for your comment.</p>
37	<p>Commissioner Janet Taylor Hendry County</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>We appreciate the opportunity for members of the Glades Community to have a seat at the table. Our community unite behind the idea that the Army Corps must be guided by science and complete the projects that are approved and technically proven to bring relief to Lake Okeechobee and St. Lucie and the Caloosahatchee estuaries. We support finishing the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, which was started nearly two decades ago and includes the Western Everglades Restoration Project. Combined, these projects will achieve the original stated goal of restoring the Everglades. Unfortunately, activists have threatened progress through attempts to force the sale of land south of the lake. Our communities are not for sale, and we encourage the Army Corps to continue serving as a partner in advocating for the completion of CERP, and we look forward to the day when frequent discharges become a thing of the past. Thank you all for coming to us tonight.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Since 2000, much progress has been made. Construction has begun on the first generation of CERP project modifications already authorized by congress. These include the Picayune Strand Restoration, the Indian River Lagoon South and Site 1 Impoundment projects. Congressional authorization has been received for the second generation of CERP projects including Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands-Phase 1, the Caloosahatchee (C-34) West Basin Storage Reservoir, and the C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project which are already under construction or are operational and the Broward County Water Preserve Areas which is currently being designed. The Central Everglades Planning Project is also currently awaiting congressional authorization. All of these CERP projects contribute significant ecological benefits to the system and the specific regional habitats in which they are located.</p>

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			<p>The Corps and SFWMD are committed to implementing CERP. The IDS is required as part of the CERP Programmatic Regulations and provides the sequencing of federally cost-shared Everglades restoration projects. A formal re-valuation of the IDS completed in 2015. The re-evaluation of the IDS maximizes holistic benefits to the regional system as early as possible and ensures that additional projects will be ready in order to continue progress on Everglades restoration.</p>
38	<p>Mali Gardner City of Clewiston  August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Good Evening. Thank you. I really have one point, and I want to get clarification, and I think it was on your slide, that there was five hundred and eight-nine thousand acres in this project. Is that the total project area? And how many acres of that is owned already by the state or federal government? I'd like to look into that, because I saw that target area and I was concerned that the amount of acreage they were talking about. And I agree with Commissioner Taylor that I believe, you know, the project, CERP project should be completed and funded. Particularly my concern is Herbert Hoover Dike, and that's the safety issue that the project needs to be done, but I'm concerned 578,000 acres that I saw on the little map tonight, how much of that is already owned by state and federal, so I really would appreciate that information. Thank you.</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated. The preliminary study area currently encompasses 589,500 acres (941 square miles) of land. State owned lands currently encompass approximately 35,000 acres, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management.</p> <p>The Corps and SFWMD are committed to implementing CERP. Please reference comment 36 above.</p>

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39	<p>Mayor Philip Roland City of Clewiston</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Phillip Roland, Mayor of Clewiston. I'm not going to talk about Western right this second. The Kissimmee Valley covers 5500 square miles, and you all dump water into Lake Okeechobee, which is 700 square miles, and that's the reason that the mayor from Fort Myers is here, and people from Stuart are here, is because of the green algae. I saw algae the first time when I was thirty years old, after I come out of the service, after at the Kissimmee was straightened in 1960. First time I saw green algae, and it was right out in the middle of the lake. And until you -- until you control the water, the ninety-five percent of the water that comes into Lake Okeechobee, you cannot control what's in the south. And I think your plan, the Western, is right, but you're going to fill it up in one year, and then where do you go from there? If you don't store water north of the lake -- and let's talk about shared adversity. Let Orlando and everything south of there share in the adversity, the Fort Myers, Stuart, us and everybody else in the south shares. Thank you.</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential project opportunities include improved system-wide operational flexibility by bringing more water south from Lake Okeechobee.</p> <p>Planning efforts are also currently underway for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) Project. The preliminary project area, where the placement of features will be considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee watershed north of the lake. LOW aims to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee; provide for better management of lake water levels; reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries</p>

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			<p>downstream of the lake; and improve system wide operational flexibility.</p> <p>Both of these efforts will provide opportunities for storage both north and southwest of the lake. WERP and LOW were identified in the recent IDS update and will focus on areas that will complement ongoing restoration efforts to the east of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Indian River Lagoon South Project (C-44 Reservoir)), west of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Caloosahatchee (C-34) West Basin Storage Reservoir) and south of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> CEPP).</p>
40	<p>Patty Whitehead August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Hi, good evening. I'm representing the Responsible Growth Management Coalition out of Lee County and the Cypress Cove Conservancy out of Collier County, and I want to preface my main remarks about this project with something that I think we can all agree on, I think it's foundational to our understanding of the Everglades. The presence of humans in south and central Florida has displaced and in some cases permanently destroyed the rich, unique and highly biodiverse and irreplaceable natural values of the Everglades. So that takes in all impacts, not just southern impacts, but central impacts.</p> <p>So my main question is for the agencies that are here, how will this project interface with another NEPA planning process currently underway also in the Western Everglades called the Eastern Collier County Habitat Conservation Plan, which sounds nice and environmentally friendly, but is in fact a plan to urbanize Eastern Collier County to the tune of 45,000 acres of residential, commercial, high density intensity. Also, to be served by hundreds of miles of new roads, many of them</p>	<p>According to the Federal Register Vol. 81, No. 58 dated March 25, 2016), the USFWS is currently preparing a Draft EIS related to an anticipated permit application from nine Collier County Florida landowners (prospective applicants) for the incidental take of federally listed species. The permit application would include an Eastern Collier Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (ECMSHCP). The prospective applicants intend to seek an incidental take permit that would authorize take resulting from the residential and commercial development and earth mining activities described in the ECMSHCP on certain lands. The NEPA document for WERP is unrelated to this effort.</p>

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		<p>multilane highways. How will panthers and other large mammals that require large swaths of natural native lands that are interconnected that in most cases need to be uplands, but can be seasonally restricted wetlands. How will these animals breathe, feed, find mates, be restricted from impacts, not only from humans, but from their own species. As we know, male panthers have panther on panther impacts, they fight each other for territory.</p> <p>Is this project aimed to serve that other project? Is the water for the humans, or, you know, you're going to be sheet flowing new water through the Western Everglades, this is the place where panthers rely on now for their survival. So many questions to be answered, and I hope that there's going to be an interface between this NEPA planning process and that one, it raises so many questions.</p>	<p>The Corps will coordinate with the USFWS in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA to confirm the presence of Federally listed threatened and endangered species that are either known to occur or are likely to occur within the project area for WERP. Consultation with the USFWS will be initiated as appropriate once species effects determinations are made. With respect to the Florida panther, an analysis of the potential for elimination or modification to panther habitat as a result of WERP implementation will be made. The Corps commits to avoiding, minimizing or mitigating for adverse effects to federally threatened and endangered species. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental effects will be incorporated into the proposed action and the planning process.</p>
41	<p>Catherine Backos August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>I don't know if I can reach this. Can everybody hear me? My name is Catherine Backos, I'm a realtor from the Naples area, Fort Myers, Lee County, and I have to say that the efforts made here are -- how shall I put it -- sorely needed in our area. We pride ourselves on having some of the finest beaches in Florida, and yet the estuaries are polluted, our river is polluted, our beaches are polluted. This has had a serious impact on our industry, and I realize that the man-made creation of damming up the lake and having the water -- straightening the Kissimmee not only impacted the people in Clewiston and in our areas, the question is how much money is needed to really arrive at a program, and do we have help from the federal government,</p>	<p>The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. WERP is a component of the CERP which is 50-50 cost shared between the State of Florida and the Federal government. The SFWMD is the non-federal sponsor for WERP.</p> <p>For WERP, the NEPA document or EIS will be combined with the Corps planning document called a PIR. The WERP is a SMART Planning</p>

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		<p>and is the state bought into actually doing something to keep the environment of Florida healthy.</p> <p>And if we can get answers to that and a time line and a budget and who is going to put what money in, I know we all voted for Amendment One, but we haven't really seen much result from that. So I think those are the answers I'm seeking on behalf of people in our area and on behalf of everybody in this room.</p>	<p>Project. The Corps planning process has changed. It has been updated to address criticisms that it was too slow and expensive. Studies must not take more than 3 years to complete, not cost more than 3 million dollars, and include efficient/effective coordination and reviews amongst the 3 levels of the Corps Chain of Command (District, Division, and Headquarters) to address issues early and efficiently. Upon completion of the Final Integrated PIR and EIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed in coordination with the Corps Chief's Report that goes to Office of Management Budget to submit to Congress for consideration in the next Water Resources Development Act. A Chief's Report is expected to be completed within 3 years of project initiation.</p> <p>An estimate of the potential cost of the Recommended Plan for WERP is unavailable as the project team is currently initiating the study.</p>
42	<p>Pete Quasius</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Spot on. I'm Pete Quasius, I'm the advocacy director for Audubon of the Western Everglades. We all know we need to move water south. We need to move clean water south. We need to move lots of water south. I'm pleased to see that we've expanded the conceptual scope of this project to include the connections with the lake. I think we also need to expand the opportunity to move more water into the Big Cypress. Nobody wants to have water, polluted water, in their streets, on their farm fields, on their beaches and their homes, but the answer</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for the WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11,</p>

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		<p>is to find ways to convey clean water south, huge quantities of clean water south.</p> <p>250,000 acres of storage is six inches off the lake. We all know how fast the lake can rise if we have a big storm. We need to provide the opportunity to treat, clean and move water to appropriate places that allows us all to have the prosperity of our economy and continued quality of life.</p> <p>So I look forward with this process. I'll see you here on the 23rd.</p>	<p>2016) are anticipated. Both structural and non-structural features or activities that address one or more planning objectives will be formulated for the study area.</p> <p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential project opportunities include improved system-wide operational flexibility by bringing more water south from Lake Okeechobee. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are completed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p>
43	<p>Tom Van Lent Everglades Foundation  August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>My name is Tom Van Lent. I'm here representing the Everglades Foundation. Our main purpose in tonight here is to listen and to learn, understand what the scope of the project is. We understand that you're going through a scoping process to define what that is, and we also know you're on a very compressed, streamlined planning timeline; therefore, I urge</p>	<p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress</p>

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		<p>you to focus as quickly as possible and tell the public what you're planning.</p> <p>The scope here ranged from all possible projects in CERP are on the table to the very limited description from the Yellow Book about what the L-28 and what's kind of in between sort of is left up -- is what is left to be decided. So please focus and let us know as soon as possible what your plans are, what is possible.</p> <p>Now, the Everglades Foundation clearly believes that the Yellow Book efforts certainly do need to be addressed, there's two major problems in this basin that we see inside the basin design. One is the heavy nutrient pollution coming off the L-28 Interceptor and into WCA 3A accounts for about a third of the total pollutant load to the Everglades and has a general negative effect, but specifically it has a huge detrimental effect to the Miccosukee tribal homeland. You're depriving them of the use of their homeland, and that is unconscionable, and that problem does in fact need to be addressed.</p> <p>Secondly, the L-28 interceptor has a massive hydrologic disruption to the whole northeast Big Cypress, and that is the very heart of your -- your project, that does need to be addressed.</p> <p>While we welcome any opportunity to do more with this project, we would like to see what's on the table. We don't think the project can be successful unless those two problems, at least, are addressed and solved. So thank you.</p>	<p>Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. Project features considered under CERP include modification of levees and canals, water control structures, pumps, and stormwater treatment areas with a total storage capacity of 7,600 acre-feet located within and adjacent to the Miccosukee and Seminole Indian Reservations in Collier and Hendry Counties. This CERP component will serve as the starting point for the WERP and will be refined through the planning process.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy.</p> <p>The project team has defined preliminary project objectives as listed in the response to comment 12 above. One of those preliminary project objectives is to restore</p>

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			<p>low nutrient levels in the water flowing through the western basins.</p> <p>Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are completed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p>
44	<p>Paul McGehee</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>I'm Paul McGehee, I'm here for Glades Electric Cooperative, and my questions have already been somewhat answered, but I would stress that as the plans move forward in any of the planning phases, that as we have electrical infrastructure extensively through that area, which our members are invested in, that we would be brought into the planning sessions and anything that may have to be rerouted or moved or retired, that the members of Glades Electric Cooperative are not going to be on the hook financially for those costs, but I want to know which agency plans to actually pay those expenses.</p> <p>So please keep us in the loop early. There may be two different plans that just the cost of mitigating those infrastructure costs may swing the choice between any of those plans, so just please keep us in the loop early.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. This information will be incorporated into the planning phase where appropriate and or during Pre-Construction, Engineering and Design when a recommended plan is identified.</p>
45	<p>Shannon Larsen</p> <p>August 16, 2016</p>	<p>First of all, I have a little giggle in me, um, talked about when Lake Okeechobee tripped over or tipped over its boundaries. Lake Okeechobee doesn't have a boundary, lakes don't have a</p>	<p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big</p>

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	<p>NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>boundary, and rivers don't have a boundary. We created it when we moved into their boundary.</p> <p>When and where the water needs to be. I really do hope that the Army Corps and water management district really will pay attention to that, because you haven't been very good about that yet, in all the years you've been managing. I'm glad to see that you're thinking continuity rather than fragmentation, it's been fragmented too long.</p> <p>And in closing, I just have a few suggestions. That you dig grade to type S to an elevation of eight feet, so more water – excuse me -- may be diverted towards Big Cypress. Right now it's being diverted to the WCA 3A. That's Big Cypress Preserve's water, let's get it back to them. Fill in L-28 so water can overflow towards the west of Big Cypress. Take measures to improve water quality from L-28 interceptor because the north feeder is providing dirty water and that needs to be taken care of.</p> <p>We need to allow releases through S-344, and I would like you to use something I noticed in your plan you have 2 STA pictures, and I would like -- and over 7,000 acres of land for those two STA. If you use something like the managed aquatic plant system, you'd only be using about thirty-four acres per system, and I encourage you to start looking into different ways other than the STA. There are things less land, disturbing less of the environment, and actually do a better job.</p> <p>And we need to get rid of the legacy phosphate in Okeechobee or nothing is going to work. Thank you.</p>	<p>Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. Project features considered under CERP include modification of levees and canals, water control structures, pumps, and stormwater treatment areas with a total storage capacity of 7,600 acre-feet located within and adjacent to the Miccosukee and Seminole Indian Reservations in Collier and Hendry Counties. This CERP component will serve as the starting point for the WERP and will be refined through the planning process.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be</p>

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			<p>integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p> <p>Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed.</p>
46	<p>Ramon Iglesias August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>You know, I've heard a lot about the Everglades today, but we've got to remember that Lake Okeechobee is the liquid heart of the Everglades, and my question is when we were in drought conditions will the aquifers have enough water to replenish the sheet flow that you were talking about, or is your intention to drain that lake that we survive off, that we need? Could you answer that question?</p> <p>When we're in a drought, will the aquifers be able to replenish the sheet flow that you were talking about going into the Everglades?</p> <p>Okay. So when we get into drought conditions and you need that sheet flow and you're running out of water from the aquifers, are you going to pull the water out of Lake Okeechobee?</p> <p>Okay. Since I've got thirty-eight seconds on the clock, I'm going to talk about the Kissimmee. Can you tell me that with the straightening of the Kissimmee and putting it back to the way it</p>	<p>The original CERP Project identified to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem was called the Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor Modification. The purpose of this project, as defined within the CERP, is to reestablish sheet flow from the West Feeder Canal across the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and into BCNP, maintain flood protection on Seminole Tribal lands, and ensure that inflows to the North and West Feeder Canals meet applicable water quality standards. Project features considered under CERP include modification of levees and canals, water control structures, pumps, and stormwater treatment areas with a total storage capacity of 7,600 acre-feet located within and adjacent to the Miccosukee and Seminole Indian Reservations in Collier and Hendry Counties. This CERP component will serve as</p>

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		<p>was, how much tax dollars were spent, or will be spent when it's all final?</p>	<p>the starting point for the WERP and will be refined through the planning process.</p> <p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p> <p>Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will be considered during plan formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed.</p>
47	<p>Vivian Haney August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Hi. Okay. Hi. My name is Vivian Haney and I'm the reigning Miss Sugar here in Clewiston, and I am very proud to represent the sugar industry at this time.</p> <p>The board of the sugar industry represents 32 billion dollars a year and over twelve thousand dollars job to our economy. It is</p>	<p>The preliminary study area presented during the NEPA scoping meeting does not mean that lands contained within the study area boundaries are to be acquired under WERP. The preliminary study area represents the area of interest and is defined by the project</p>

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		<p>important to everyone to understand that taking more farm land out of production will destroy jobs and destroy future communities without solving the problems of large Lake Okeechobee discharges.</p> <p>We support moving forward with the science-based CERP that will benefit all our waterways and communities, not just the coastal estuaries. Thank you for protecting the (inaudible).</p>	<p>authority; the location of alternative plans; and the location of resources that have the potential to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the project. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p> <p>Through the planning process, the Corps will draw conclusions with regard to the use of lands already acquired for restoration purposes and their potential use in WERP. The Corps understands that the state currently supports efforts sited on available lands and that the state considers those to be preferable for economic and other reasons. The State owns approximately 35,000 acres, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management, of land within the study area. The team will consider use of that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable.</p>
48	<p>Teddy Gardner August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>I am not Mary Ann Martin, but I will refer to her comment. I've heard a lot of good information here this evening, but I haven't heard one that I consider to be critical before you start on any project. What's the acceptance criteria? What are you looking for? How much sheet flow in each area? How are you going to maintain it? As Ramon points out, during a drought period, how will you maintain the required sheet flows, or are there periods when you need no sheet flow? I'd like to see that acceptance</p>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan</p>

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		<p>criteria that you're working to in order to size everything you're doing. That's it.</p>	<p>formulation. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning.</p> <p>Information is not yet available to address several of the provided comments. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p>
49	<p>Brad Cornell August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Good evening. I'm Brad Cornell, and I'm here on behalf of Audubon of the Western Everglades and Audubon Florida. Really appreciate the opportunity to have public this comment and to hear from all of our – our citizen friends and colleagues and other organizations.</p> <p>We certainly welcome the focus that this is bringing to opportunities to restore the over drained Big Cypress swamp and its watershed, this is a great thing, and overdue.</p> <p>Audubon is especially looking forward to learning more about the specifics of the planning effort. I know this is a scoping process, so that's kind of part of the public tonight, but we're looking for more details, obviously. We're going to participate.</p> <p>In particular, we do recommend the scope of the study be expanded to include more of the Big Cypress Preserve. This is to allow us to consider more opportunities to rehydrate and restore the over drainage that comes from L-28, Tamiami Trail and other canals throughout the system. To us this seems like</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for the WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p>

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		<p>really low (inaudible) and it seems really relatively low cost, so we recommend that solution. Thank you.</p>	
50	<p>Nicole Williams August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Hello. My name is Nicole Williams. I represent Florida Environmental Coalition and EPAC, the Environmental Peace and Education Center.</p> <p>I'm definitely behind the plan as far as we do need to move water south. In your plan that I heard you present this evening, I did not hear very much in the way of what type of research you plan to do with the water and the environmental impact that moving dirty water into the area will have. Overflow, sheet flow that is not treated. I always (inaudible) the DEP for the water quality mayhem up in Tallahassee, if you, you know, allow me to say that. What they deemed was that if you weigh 177 pounds, a human being, and you only eat 22 ounces of fish from Lake Okeechobee a month, you more than likely will not get cancer, but only on those two criteria did they use their Monte Carlo method to figure out that they would higher the amount of pollution allowed into the water. We were all worried that the only research they did was the uptake of pollution in the fish in the water. There was absolutely zero study done on the uptake of hogs, deer, turkey and everything else that a lot of people, Glades County Hunt Club, a lot of other people here, we live off the land. Several of my own family members living off the land, working for Lykes Brothers, died of cancer. A lot of my own family has died of cancer because of water quality issues coming from north of the lake and out of the lake, both in Lee County and in the Everglades.</p> <p>So my question and my plea to you, to add into what you're doing, is definitely become part of the water quality demand to make sure -- right now the water quality is entering at 1700</p>	<p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>

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		<p>parts per billion of pollution coming into the Everglades; that's supposedly legal. Allowable amount allowed to flow into the Everglades is ten parts per billion and we are off by some ten parts per billion to 1700 parts per billion.</p> <p>I'm really happy to see that you guys are including the plans much further north of Lake Okeechobee, because obviously we need to clean the water coming into the lake before any water would be clean to the Caloosahatchee or to the St. Lucy.</p>	
51	<p>David A Ulrich August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>I'm Dave Ulrich, and I'm speaking also for RGMC, but as well as the Southwest Florida Clean Water Movement. I made the chart, I'll just leave it there and I'll be available to discuss it afterwards, but this chart shows one of the things -- my wife says I shouldn't tell people my age, but I am two months short of being 83, and believe me, I think it's wonderful what we've heard what people are planning. I'm fully supportive of it. I won't be here.</p> <p>What I want to know is what we're going to do in the next two years, which I hope I'm here, because what's happening, every time I look at the charts on what's happening and the gates the flow ways and what's happening in the water conservation area, I don't like the WCA, I prefer to say the words, I'm sorry, I'm not an alphabet soup person. But we have the water conservation areas are loaded with water. Water in those conservation areas is much better than the water that's in Lake O. It may not quite meet Nicole's standards -- and she and I are friends, by the way, and we don't always agree, but we are trying to see something happen.</p> <p>And to me we have a plug at the bottom of this whole area, and I've prepared a sheet and I have a few copies here, and if</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Please see responses above to comments 4 and 35.</p>

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		<p>anyone gives me their e-mail address, I'll be happy to send it to you electronically. But the fact is that as the water comes down, the water conservation areas are full, and they have to close the gates at the bottom. And that's not because of the sparrow, it's because the whole area is full. Sparrow is part of the issue, but we need the study.</p> <p>I will be here on the 23rd, I've asked attendance on the 23rd. I understand my time is up. I was hoping for three minutes, but I'll take it. Thank you.</p>	
52	<p>Bobby C. Billy August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Thank you. Miccosukee is my nation, we still holding our regional rights of this land. Seminole Tribe break from us in 1959, Miccosukee Tribe break from us for 1962, and we independent, we still holding in the belief the way that God has gave us.</p> <p>I'm glad you're waking up. It's about time you're waking up. Its pollution been making by the people living here. Early 1800s, it wasn't like that, not like this at all. The way God had gave us living, his creation, respect it, which means respect yourself. If you don't respect the nature, you're not respecting yourself. You waking up, but it's too late.</p> <p>What we need is clean water. And cover up those ditches, because whole State of Florida, entire wetland, almost ninety percent State of Florida, when they create the canals, which leads drain to Florida, develop. That's a mistake that the Army Corps and Water Management did, almost end to clean water. The garbage and poison we talking about.</p> <p>We need to respect our future generation. Our young people, we need to respect our young people. What we going to give</p>	<p>Both the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida have been asked to participate in Government-to-Government consultation as part of the Corps obligation for coordination under WERP. Potential impacts to historic sites and traditional cultural properties and practices will be assessed as part of the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS.</p> <p>Agencies including the SFWMD, the local sponsor, the BIA, the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and BCNP were asked at the beginning of the planning process to become cooperating agencies under NEPA for the WERP via correspondence dated September 2, 2016. The Seminole Tribe of Florida indicated their acceptance to participate in the NEPA as a cooperating agency for WERP in correspondence dated September 13, 2016. The BIA indicated their acceptance in</p>

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		<p>to next twenty years or ten years, because lot of farmers moving in, the sugars, development, cities, encroachment, natural area disappeared. We are responsible, taking the weight of future of our people generation and natural generation because you don't have no voice with just animals, fish, deer, bear, all of those things do have a right to live, drink the water, eat the food, raise the family like we do. We do need to respect that.</p> <p>So y'all need to cover up those ditches, simple as that, because that's causing the problems. Just like you cutting up your body of the body and then they bleed, that's what's happening. The way the creator has gave us, blood vein feeds our body, all over our body, but when they cut it, it bleed out. So that's what's happening. So if you want to the live in God's creation of the earth, cover those ditches up as fast as you can, protect the nature and your future of life. Thank you.</p>	<p>correspondence dated September 19, 2016. The Miccosukee Tribe of Florida did not provide a response.</p> <p>Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment within the project area will be considered during plan formulation. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>
53	<p>Raoul Bataller</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Your basic job with the Army is to read the land and deploy your assets in the best way that uses all the advantages of the land, and that's your business. And that's pretty much simplified, but if I was in private business doing this instead of a military man, I would say what's the problem, because if I'm going to be responsible for the consequences, I want to have some control over every single source of the problem.</p> <p>I don't see how this, which is really you're working the land for about half the area, actually goes to the problem. You haven't quantified anything. What happens when increase in population comes in? What happens when all the stuff from -- from effluent, all the industrial stuff goes right onto the ground, and in this sand, which is nothing like the mountains of Colorado or the granite state of -- or the rocks of Connecticut,</p>	<p>Adequate treatment facilities necessary to achieve water quality standards for new water delivered to the natural system will be considered in the planning and formulation of WERP alternatives. The condition of the water in the project area as it exists today will be identified and adequate treatment facilities will be considered in alternative plans based upon the current quality of water and Corps policy. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p>

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		<p>this stuff goes right into the ground water and is transmitted around. What allowance have you got for quantification of the problem as it evolves over the years? How about in the next fifty years? All this work has no time line, apparently.</p> <p>We're going to have extra population, we're going to have bigger problems, but you're making no effort. It's as if you're deploying soldiers in a field without any regard. In this thing you have biological considerations and chemicals. That's a big part of moving water around, you have to know what's in it. We learned that this year, and this year all the plans before got put into history because all of a sudden we had a science project the size of Lake Okeechobee that you could see from space, it was so colorful. We cannot have that any longer.</p> <p>And this is not just about the Everglades, we also learned that the estuaries, both of them, are every bit as important and valuable as the Everglades. We have had a problem here with communication (inaudible). I run a newspaper, I started here twenty years ago. I have been involved in every aspect of these people's life. But I came from Connecticut, where Paul Tooter Jones also came from.</p> <p>I'm out of time. And I think that the entire kind of Woodstock atmosphere out there on the tolerance and craziness, green was imported directly here and we have had the effects of that intolerance and the pile on one company and one town for twenty years. That's why these people got into church two weeks ago and said they don't care about us. We have a problem here where the public relations thing that was set in motion because erroneously United States Sugar was picked as the only evil in this thing, and now that they've cleaned up for</p>	

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		21 consecutive years, the problem is still here. That erroneous judgement has got to be put aside.	
54	Dennis Duke Department of Interior  August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting	<p>Good evening. I'm Dennis Duke with the United States Department of the Interior. I'm here on behalf to basically inform you that obviously the Department is keenly interested in this effort. Glad to see and applaud the efforts of the Army and the South Florida Water Management District in moving forward with this effort.</p> <p>We're keenly interested because of the fact not only hopefully to estuary by allowing us to send -- the opportunity to send more water to the south to better improve the management of water levels in Lake Okeechobee, improve water conditions, both inflow and outflow, quality and timing and distribution of water to the two Native American tribes that have reservations in this area, and get all the way down in the water conservation areas, improve the water there as well as the Big Cypress National Preserve and the Everglades National Park.</p> <p>As you're aware, the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force has been hosting collaborative workshops on identifying the data and information that's available in this area, and we're pleased and thankful that you've chosen to move this study up on the integrated delivery schedule and perform it now rather than later, and we look forward to working with you on that.</p> <p>Mentioned earlier, we are hosting – the task force is hosting a workshop next week, next Tuesday, the 23rd, it'll be in this room from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., and at that point you're all invited. It will be a different format; we'll have tables, you will be asked to sit at the table with representatives from the Corps, Water Management District, Interior and other agencies to give</p>	Thank you for your comment. The Corps appreciates and welcomes your participation in the WERP process.

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		<p>us your ideas directly, okay, to look at maps, tell us where you think the problems are, what do you think needs to be done about it, and we'll then take – collect those maps up, that information up, consolidate it and send it to the Army Corps of Engineers for their consideration in furtherance of this effort. It is a very open and collaborative process, different than here. We will not be taking public comments, per se, because you will be there giving us your comments firsthand, so we invite you all to come next week and join us. Thank you.</p>	
55	<p>Rae Ann Wessel Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation  August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Good evening. Rae Ann Wessel, Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation. Thank you for having this meeting this evening, allowing us to have an initial look at the proposal. I think you're hearing very clearly that we need some clarification about the details of the proposal. To the extent that what the magnitude of the problem is, I haven't been able to really get my arms around that, what the target goals and performance measures are, both for flow volumes that are trying to be rectified, equalized, the timing and the seasonality of those flows, what targets we have for water quality; clearly there are significant challenges that were identified in the formation of the project, but we don't really have an idea about what it is we're dealing with, and I think that needs to be very clearly articulated up front.</p> <p>What volume of water is coming from the lake and what percent -- for the project, and what percent of the project water need is that supplying? What is the capacity of this discharge from the lake to the -- to the project connection? In terms of operational flexibility, I'm curious as to what the specific operational flexibility options are. I'd like to know about east-west connectivity for equalizing flows; as we know, rainfall can be very, very spatially diverse.</p>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p> <p>The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p>

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		<p>Zooming out a little bit, how do the lands north and east of the project boundary influence the in-flow to the project? And finally, what is the flow south out of -- flow capacity south out of the lake?</p>	
56	<p>Marissa Carrozzo August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>I'm here on behalf of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to be here tonight to provide comments. Like others here tonight, I need clarity to better understand more of the details of this project, better understand the performance measures and the criteria that will be used to evaluate this project and the project alternatives as we move forward.</p> <p>We'd like to better understand how this project will -- how much storage this project will provide, how many acres of wetlands are going to be restored with the project, how water quality will be integrated and what is the intended flows throughout.</p> <p>And we understand that this is, you know, part -- this is the initial scoping meeting; however, to better provide more detailed comments we would like to understand the project better, so we look forward to our many engagements when specifics of this project are further explored.</p>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. Water quality compliance considerations will be integrated into all phases of the planning process.</p> <p>The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p> <p>The project team will utilize modeling tools and PMs to evaluate alternative plans. These PMs will be developed from the Big Cypress Regional Ecosystem CEM which identifies the major anthropogenic drivers and stressors on the natural system, the ecological effects of</p>

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			<p>those stressors, and the best biological attributes or indicators of those ecological responses. As the planning effort for WERP continues, a methodology will be developed to calculate HU values for the study area to support justification of a selected plan.</p>
57	<p>Cara Capp August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Hello. Cara Capp for the National Parks Conservation Association.</p> <p>We are certainly excited and supportive of this project moving forward, as we are with all CERP projects, we look forward to seeing each of them completed in different phases, especially the expedited time frame, which gives us not only a more narrow window for progress, but also the type of frequency in these meetings that allows people to be fully engaged. We saw that happen in (inaudible) and we look forward to that happening again.</p> <p>I know that there was a lot of support for focusing on the Western region in the Integrated Delivery Schedule process, so this is certainly a project area where there's a lot of interest and a lot of people are looking to see restoration progress, certainly me among them. We know that this project can bring important benefits to two national parks, Big Cypress and Everglades National Park.</p> <p>In terms of something that was mentioned previously earlier, relieving the high lake levels through canal connections, and thereby relieving the estuaries and getting water to the park, I would ask in the early phases that the agencies, sooner than later, spell out some goals and measurable so we have some understanding of volume, what kind of percentage of benefit</p>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. Additional detailed information will be provided as plan formulation efforts for WERP continue and the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS are developed. The project team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Detailed information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.</p> <p>Through the planning process, the Corps will draw conclusions with regard to the use of lands already acquired for restoration purposes and their potential use in WERP. The Corps understands that the state currently supports efforts sited on available lands and that the state considers those to be preferable for economic and other reasons. The State owns approximately 35,000 acres</p>

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		<p>we could see in terms of relieving the estuary discharges and if we're going to get that water down to Everglades National Park, how much that flow would benefit the ecosystem.</p> <p>I heard a question earlier as well, and I want to reiterate an understanding of how much land for this project is already owned and if buying more land is an opportunity or if it's a constraint moving forward. I think that would be important information as we gather next week for the workshop to give people an idea of what we're working with.</p> <p>So again, just look forward to supporting this process, continuing to come to these meetings, make sure we maximize the ecosystem benefits as outlined.</p>	<p>of land within the study area, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management. The team will consider use of that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during plan formulation efforts.</p>
58	Lynwood Bishop August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting	<p>My name is Lynwood Bishop. I'm a sixth generation Floridian. I've lived in this area all my life. I currently live in West Palm Beach.</p> <p>And it seems to me that we have spent so much time, effort and money trying to accommodate the situation and all this water, you don't know where to put it, you're working on all these other projects without focusing on what you should be, and that is to hold the water to the north where it's coming from, clean it up there, let it settle into the lake in a natural flow. And we also need to do the same thing on the estuaries, both in Martin County and over in Lee County. These people, for instance, Martin County, over seventy percent of the water that goes into the St. Lucie River is coming from their own county, their own agriculture, all the cesspools, everything else around there, and you're wanting this area to pay the price for it. I think enough is enough.</p>	<p>The preliminary study area for WERP encompasses the tributary areas of WCA 3A to restore natural areas within Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation and the Miccosukee Indian Reservation, including areas downstream in BCNP. The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential project opportunities include improved system-wide operational flexibility by bringing more water south from Lake Okeechobee.</p>

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		<p>It's got to come to the point of where the people that are polluting this area and bringing it down here need to start paying, and that starts with Disney World and coming south.</p>	<p>Planning efforts are also currently underway for the LOW Project. The preliminary project area, where the placement of features will be considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee watershed north of the lake. LOW aims to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee; provide for better management of lake water levels; reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries downstream of the lake; and improve system wide operational flexibility.</p> <p>Both of these efforts will provide opportunities for storage both north and southwest of the lake. WERP and LOW were identified in the recent IDS update and will focus on areas that will complement ongoing restoration efforts to the east of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Indian River Lagoon South Project (C-44 Reservoir)), west of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Caloosahatchee (C-34) West Basin Storage Reservoir) and south of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> CEPP).</p>
59	<p>Taylor Bishop August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Taylor Bishop. I didn't have any prepared remarks, but I'm the 7<sup>th</sup> generation.</p> <p>I just wanted to talk about a few things. How many acres of farm land will you be taking out of the production within the Western Everglades Restoration Project? When you do that, you're going to affect jobs in the Glades communities, which is</p>	<p>Through the planning process, the Corps will draw conclusions with regard to the use of lands already acquired for restoration purposes and their potential use in WERP. The Corps understands that the state currently supports efforts sited on available</p>

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		<p>then going to indirectly affect not just farmers, but everybody else down here. What are then going to be the costs to these communities, the indirect costs to those people losing jobs?</p> <p>If you're going to put a flowway over the town, then hey, where we going to move everybody and, you know, how much are you going to pay them to move? You know, I just -- some of it's just a little frustrating to me here.</p> <p>I didn't have enough time to plan any more remarks, I apologize, I was listening to what you guys had to say. I think everybody else in this room will be interested to hear what those plans are, and thank you for your time.</p>	<p>lands and that the state considers those to be preferable for economic and other reasons.</p> <p>The preliminary study area presented during the NEPA scoping meeting does not mean that lands contained within the study area boundaries are to be acquired under WERP. The preliminary study area represents the area of interest and is defined by the project authority; the location of alternative plans; and the location of resources that have the potential to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the project. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p> <p>The State owns approximately 35,000 acres of land within the study area, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management. The team will consider use of that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during plan formulation efforts.</p>

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60	<p>Karson Turner Commissioner Hendry County</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Karson Turner, Commissioner for Hendry County. I just want to point out to y'all – first off, thank you for having the meeting here tonight, I appreciate you starting this thing off here in Hendry County. We want to make you cognizant of the fact that we would love to host this as many times as we can. We feel that this is the definition of ground zero for this discussion. It's an easy commute for both of the coastal communities, come on over, our TDC dollars love to see you, try to make it a two day event, it will help us out.</p> <p>The other thing is when you -- please, please be mindful. When you draw a circle around anything like this, it's not ironic that I'm following the young man who just spoke, that's the first thing that rings to our ears is that there's land being taken off of the rolls, it's taking direct and indirect jobs out of existence, and we're already behind the eight-ball as it relates to that. So please be cognizant of that thought process every time you're doing that.</p> <p>Another thing, too, I've heard this time and time again today about dirty water. Dirty water, you know, and I take offense anytime I hear, you know, Ag being blamed for that. I think we're the best conservationists as it comes to preservation of the way of life of Florida. I would encourage you all as quickly as you could to get the maps from South Florida Water Management District, that's what the parts per billion are looking like actually in the WCA, or excuse me, WCA. I ate alphabet soup as well, Everglades National Park, and, you know, the Loxahatchee Wildlife National Refuge, you know, so on and so forth.</p>	<p>Please see response to comment 59 above. The preliminary study area presented during the NEPA scoping meeting does not mean that lands contained within the study area boundaries are to be acquired under WERP. The preliminary study area represents the area of interest and is defined by the project authority; the location of alternative plans; and the location of resources that have the potential to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the project.</p> <p>Thank you for your input concerning water quality as related to agriculture in this area.</p>

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		<p>And then I also think you need it as plain as the nose on your face; in my case it's a very large nose, but, you know, as you look at what's coming in to the top end of the lake and what's coming out the bottom end, and then some of the best management practices. I know you told us the folks on the Western basin here, but I really think that we need to try to tie that into the discussion as much as we can, because I think it is going to show time and time again that Ag is doing a great job, and, you know, we're putting our best foot forward and trying to help be a part of the solution. Thank you very much for being here tonight.</p>	
61	<p>Rhonda Roff August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Remember when we were all in grade school and we wanted the teacher to forget that we were there before we had to get up and speak in front of a group, and now we're all clamoring for the microphone. What changed? I'm on the clock. Sorry. Okay.</p> <p>I'm Rhonda Roff. I'm a property owner in Hendry County. One of my residences is on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, and I represent Sierra Club, Caloosahatchee Group, tonight representing the Sierra Club Florida.</p> <p>I think that the folks in this town know that environmental issues are human race issues at the very heart of them, and that there's nothing about Sierra Club that is ever going to be willing to risk human health.</p> <p>And Janet, we would really love the opportunity to talk with you and the Glades Lives Matter about that, because it is so critical. We want to see this dike fixed. We want human lives to be spared from any kind of catastrophe that may happen as a result of this dike breaching, especially given what we know are</p>	<p>Through the planning process, the Corps will draw conclusions with regard to the use of lands already acquired for restoration purposes and their potential use in WERP. The Corps understands that the state currently supports efforts sited on available lands and that the state considers those to be preferable for economic and other reasons.</p> <p>The Herbert Hoover Dike Dam Safety Modification Report (DSMR) and ROD was signed on August 30, 2016. A cutoff wall was determined to be the least costly, technically acceptable risk reduction measure for remediation of the HHD embankment in areas that have been identified as high risk due to internal erosion failure modes (erosion of the internal structure of the embankment due to seepage forces). Implementation of the DSMR risk reduction project is planned from 2019 through 2025 dependent on funding. The WERP project</p>

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		<p>the predictions for the increasingly severe fluctuations of drought and flood cycles within the context of climate change.</p> <p>So I'm assuming that even though this is on a really tight schedule, that this all is happening after the dike gets fixed. Maybe, maybe not. Hopefully it is.</p> <p>And then what I would like to know, because mostly I have questions, I really don't understand the project too much, I think it's a great idea, but I don't understand it. So the questions here are at what lake level will this project be implemented? What kind of land and how much Ag land specifically will be taken out of service, and how will the legacy (inaudible) be dealt with in the land that is rehydrated as a result.</p> <p>In light of the proposed human health criteria, what water quality standards will be employed and at what locations will they be monitored and enforced, particularly if the Seminole Tribe does not prevail in the lawsuit regarding the water quality standards.</p> <p>Sierra Club opposes ASR everywhere. It does nothing for water quality, we oppose it flat out.</p> <p>You just -- we'll have more questions and we'll submit them before the 24th. Thank you very much.</p>	<p>team is currently in the initial stages of planning. Implementation of the WERP would occur after this time frame as it is dependent upon completion of a Chief's Report and congressional authorization and appropriations. Please reference comment 12 above for further explanation of the planning process and milestones.</p> <p>The preliminary study area presented during the NEPA scoping meeting does not mean that lands contained within the study area boundaries are to be acquired under WERP. The preliminary study area represents the area of interest and is defined by the project authority; the location of alternative plans; and the location of resources that have the potential to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the project. As WERP plan formulation progresses, refinements to the original scope and study area as stated in the Corps NEPA scoping letter (dated July 11, 2016) are anticipated.</p> <p>The State owns approximately 35,000 acres of land within the study area, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management. The team will consider use of that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands,</p>

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			<p>formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during plan formulation efforts.</p>
62	<p>Roger Plouffe August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Hi. I'm Roger Plouffe. I'm not representing anybody but myself. Pretty much everything that I had noted has been said already. I mean we have a lot of very sincere, intelligent people here at the meeting.</p> <p>The bottom line is I go back to what Billy said; what are we going to do for our future generations? Our future generations currently are built around agricultural and financial gain from agricultural. When I look at your Western Everglades Restoration Project, which you ask we limit our comments to, I see two natural barriers to sheet flow, so I don't understand. You're going to have to bridge I-75 and you're also going to have to bridge US 41 somehow to bring sheet flow into this area.</p> <p>Secondly, the financial impact that we're leaving. You move water south -- the gentleman here before me already had brought up a very important issue, and that is population is not going to stop growing. I was growing up in Broward County when there was building moratoriums because they couldn't get enough water down there; now they've built all the way to 27 in Broward County. It's not going to take much to cross the road.</p>	<p>The Corps is currently developing management measures and screening criteria to determine the volume of additional water from Lake Okeechobee that may be utilized by the project, if any. Potential management measures to address improved water storage, conveyance and treatment will also be considered during plan formulation. Regarding the portion of the comment with respect to I-75 and US-41 acting as potential barriers to flow, the suggestion will be reviewed and incorporated into the planning process as appropriate.</p> <p>Regarding, the portion of the comment pertaining to availability of water, the WRDA of 2000 requires CERP projects to identify water needed for the natural system to achieve CERP restoration goals and protect it from other potentially competing uses. At the same time, existing legal sources of water supply for municipal and agricultural needs must also be protected. In addition, CERP implementation cannot reduce existing</p>

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		<p>Water is essential. Population is going to grow, and as much as we want the Everglades restored to the pristine conditions they once were, it's not going to happen. It may happen in small part, but we're going to have continued population growth, we're going to need water for people.</p> <p>Again, to the financial here, Ag land, this is our livelihood, this is our blood. Thank you.</p>	<p>levels of service for flood protection. WRDA 2000 requires the inclusion of "Savings Clause" analyses within each CERP PIR. Such analyses will be conducted during plan formulation efforts for WERP.</p>
63	<p>Jennifer Earnest August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Good evening. I am in a very distinctive position in that I am a 22 year resident of Stuart; however, I was born and raised in the Glades. I'm the vice-president of the H.E. Hill Foundation, and I have the extreme privilege of working with and for some of the hardest working people out there, the American farmer, farm workers, straight from the fields and tractor drivers and mechanics.</p> <p>I'm disappointed that there's not specifics on who owns the land that you've drawn the big circle around. I also have the distinct privilege of being engaged to a charter fisherman in the Stuart area. There's no one more affected by clean water -- impacted -- than myself for farmers and myself for the fishermen of the land.</p> <p>I'm disappointed that here we are, looking at another project and we have so many projects that aren't completed. I'm also disappointed that we've heard very loudly environmental, environmental, environmental, but tonight I would like to say that I implore you to consider the human impact of what these things do; the jobs affected, the food production taken out.</p>	<p>The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. Planning efforts are also currently underway for the LOW Project. LOW aims to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee; provide for better management of lake water levels; reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries downstream of the lake; and improve system wide operational flexibility. The preliminary project area, where the placement of features will be considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee watershed north of the lake.</p> <p>Both of these efforts will provide opportunities for storage both north and southwest of the lake. WERP and LOW were identified in the recent IDS update and will focus on areas that will complement ongoing restoration efforts to the east of the lake (<i>i.e.</i></p>

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		<p>Why isn't the dike finished? All the plans in the works haven't been finished; however, we're throwing money at a whole new phase and a whole new development.</p> <p>It's time to implement and store water to the north. Why would we drain water that's polluted all the way through our aqua filters? Why would we put that into our Everglades? We need to identify areas to the north before we start these areas and putting the water draining through.</p> <p>We should implement septic inspections. How hard is that? If septic aren't the problem, then what is the problem with inspecting them? It's cheap, there's no focus groups, it is affirmed.</p> <p>And we oppose anything in this area, our area of farmers that would take a job away or food out of the mouths of the people here who are good, hard-working Glades people that can't afford to lose a job.</p> <p>So it's obvious there's no one cause and no one solution to the entire mess. However; starting the cycle over is not the route to take.</p>	<p>Indian River Lagoon South Project (C-44 Reservoir), west of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Caloosahatchee (C-34) West Basin Storage Reservoir) and south of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> CEPP). While the WERP, may be beneficial to the estuaries, it will not address septic tank inspections as part of the project. This is a role that is undertaken by individual counties and FDEP.</p> <p>The Herbert Hoover Dike DSMR and ROD was signed on August 30, 2016. A cutoff wall was determined to be the least costly, technically acceptable risk reduction measure for remediation of the HHD embankment in areas that have been identified as high risk due to internal erosion failure modes (erosion of the internal structure of the embankment due to seepage forces). Implementation of the DSMR risk reduction project is planned from 2019 through 2025 dependent on funding.</p> <p>Please see response to comment 59 above. The preliminary study area presented during the NEPA scoping meeting does not mean that lands contained within the study area boundaries are to be acquired under WERP. The preliminary study area represents the area of interest and is defined by the project authority; the location of alternative plans; and the location of resources that have the</p>

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			<p>potential to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the project. Potential environmental effects, including socioeconomics and land use, will be evaluated as part of the Draft Integrated PIR and EIS.</p> <p>The State owns approximately 35,000 acres of land within the study area, with additional parcels being under State and Federal management. The team will consider use of that land for storage and treatment of additional water, in addition to other lands, as applicable. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during plan formulation efforts.</p>
64	<p>Georgina Granville</p> <p>August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Good evening, everyone. My name is Georgina Granville, I'm the daughter of (inaudible) Granville. I grew up here in the Harlem community, I'm 37 -- I'm 38; just had a birthday August 1st, but I know everyone here has the same sentiment, there is a lot of concern that we have within this whole community, not just the Harlem community, but this whole community, and so I just ask and I plead with you, take these concerns into consideration when you start making plans, because every plan and everything that you do has impacts. It is the second, third, fourth impact.</p>	<p>Comments made during the NEPA public scoping meeting will be taken into consideration during the planning process. An EIS will be prepared for WERP in accordance with NEPA. As with all Corps' projects, WERP will be planned and implemented in accordance with all applicable laws. Thank you for your comment.</p>

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		<p>I come from New York, I'm in the Army and I live in New York, but I came home because I thought this was important.</p> <p>And there's a lot of people, you know, that grew up here that are not here, so I'm going to have to speak for them. It's very important that you please take into consideration all our concerns here, because there are more people that want to be here, but they're concerned what they are going to be presenting to you falls on deaf ears. But I told them I would come here and speak for them.</p> <p>Thank you very much for what you're trying to do for our environment and thank you all for coming tonight. God Bless you.</p>	
65	<p>Rick Murphy August 16, 2016 NEPA Scoping Meeting</p>	<p>Thank you. First, thanks for letting me speak tonight. I've been around, born and raised here, and I was around back in late '80s, the '87 to '90, whenever the swim plan was first introduced to us. Some of the folks are still here, some of us are gone. Lake O and other folks fought it tooth and nail. And we've seen a lot of changes, I think we've seen also a lot of good things happen. I think our farmers have done a great job of restoring the water.</p> <p>When you talk about the impact, the impact is also not only here in the Glades as far as maybe contributing to the factor of population, we don't have much here. I think what you have to look at, consider, if you think about it, is the big impact, which is north of us. When Disney came in, that was a big impact. Whenever they decided just recently to expand Disney again, I think they need to look at the impact of that, that's going to have a major impact.</p>	<p>The purpose of the WERP is to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water needed to restore and reconnect the western Everglades ecosystem. Planning efforts are also currently underway for the LOW Project. LOW aims to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee; provide for better management of lake water levels; reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries downstream of the lake; and improve system wide operational flexibility. The preliminary project area, where the placement of features will be considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee watershed north of the lake.</p>

Comment Number	Commenter	Comment	Response
		<p>You also have the west coast of Florida, Manatee County, Pasco, Hernando County, all those counties are going gangbusters, gangbusters as far as development. All that is going to impact the plan of where the water's going to go.</p> <p>I do believe that some of the rain could come from south, the original plan back in I-75 was to create bridges to create more flow, the culverts aren't really enough, never has been, never will be.</p> <p>I also believe that if we continue with population, we're going to have this problem, we're never going to really solve the problem, all we've got to do is try to make it better. I don't think we'll ever get it back to the quantity it used to be, the quality may get there, everybody working together, but I think all together we need to really look at the big picture here, because Florida is going to grow, there's a lot of impacts. I don't think it's just right here in the lake, okay, I think if you take away the land and the some of the livelihood of these people, it's a major impact.</p> <p>I think we can look a little further north and try to solve the problem up north and divert that water first. I think we're doing a good job of taking care of our water.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>Both of these efforts will provide opportunities for storage both north and southwest of the lake. WERP and LOW were identified in the recent IDS update and will focus on areas that will complement ongoing restoration efforts to the east of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Indian River Lagoon South Project (C-44 Reservoir)), west of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> Caloosahatchee (C-34) West Basin Storage Reservoir) and south of the lake (<i>i.e.</i> CEPP).</p> <p>Regarding, the portion of the comment pertaining to availability of water, the WRDA of 2000 requires CERP projects to identify water needed for the natural system to achieve CERP restoration goals and protect it from other potentially competing uses. At the same time, existing legal sources of water supply for municipal and agricultural needs must also be protected. In addition, CERP implementation cannot reduce existing levels of service for flood protection. WRDA 2000 requires the inclusion of "Savings Clause" analyses within each CERP PIR. Such analyses will be conducted during plan formulation efforts for WERP.</p>